

RECONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE.

PART I OF THE REPORT

OF THE

AGRICULTURAL POLICY SUB-COMMITTEE,

APPOINTED IN AUGUST, 1916,

TO CONSIDER AND REPORT UPON THE METHODS OF EFFECTING AN INCREASE IN THE HOME-GROWN FOOD SUPPLIES, HAVING REGARD TO THE NEED OF SUCH INCREASE IN THE INTEREST OF NATIONAL SECURITY.

Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty.



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To the RT. HON. D. LEYD GEORGE, M.P., Prime Minister.

SIR,

In compliance with the request contained in the accompanying letter from the late President of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries I am instructed by my colleagues to forward to you herewith the first part of our Report.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Signed) SELBORNE.

30th January, 1917.

(Enclosure.)

Board of Agriculture and Fisheries,
4, Whitehall Place, S.W.

15th November, 1916.

DEAR LORD SELBORNE,

You know that I have for some time past felt that the scope of your enquiry was so far-reaching that it might be advisable for you to consider the propriety of making an interim Report upon those aspects of the question which require legislation. I do not know what the general view of your Committee may be: in my opinion, as I indicated in evidence, I feel that a guarantee of prices, supplemented by a guarantee of wages, would provide the strongest foundation upon which to build agricultural reconstruction. I enquired of the Prime Minister whether he had any objection to your Report being divided into two parts. So far from viewing the suggestion in any hostile spirit, he says he is quite willing to accept any decision you may come to. He did not press for an interim Report, as being a matter upon which the Committee itself can best judge; and so far as I am personally concerned I hope that your colleagues will consent to this course.

I may add that Acland's Committee on Afforestation is now considering an interim Report—I believe he hopes to present it to the Reconstruction Committee very shortly.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) CRAWFORD & BALCARRES.

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LIST OF MEMBERS AND TERMS OF REFERENCE.

1. The Prime Minister appointed in August, 1916 a Sub-Committee of the Reconstruction Committee composed as follows:—

The Rt. Hon. The Earl of Selborne, K.G., G.C.M.G. (*Chairman*),

Captain Charles Bathurst, M.P.,

Mr. C. M. Douglas, D.Sc.,

The Rt. Hon. Sir Ailwyn Ffellowes, K.C.V.O.,

Mr. W. J. Fitzherbert-Brockholes,

Mr. A. D. Hall, F.R.S.,

Mr. W. A. Haviland,

Professor C. Bryner Jones, M.Sc.,

*Mr. R. E. Prothero, M.V.O., M.P.,

Mr. G. G. Rea,

Mr. G. H. Roberts, M.P.,

The Hon. E. G. Strutt,

Sir Matthew Wallace,

Mr. H. L. French,

Board of Agriculture and Fisheries,

Mr. Alexander Goddard,

Secretary of the Surveyors' Institution,

} *Joint Secretaries,*

with the following terms of reference:—

"Having regard to the need of increasing home-grown food supplies in the interest of national security, to consider and report upon the methods of effecting such increase."

2. In November, 1916 the Prime Minister appointed the following additional members to represent Irish interests on the Sub-Committee:—

The Most Rev. Dr. Kelly, Lord Bishop of Ross,

The Rt. Hon. Sir Horace C. Plunkett, K.C.V.O., F.R.S.

* Appointed in his capacity as a member of the Committee on Commercial and Industrial Policy.

RECONSTRUCTION COMMITTEE—AGRICULTURAL POLICY SUB-COMMITTEE.

PART I. OF THE REPORT.

To the Rt. Hon. D. LAURENCE GOSNELL, M.P., Prime Minister.

Sir,

The following are the terms of reference given to us by Mr. Asquith:—

"Having regard to the need of increased home-grown food supplies in the interest
"of national security, to consider and report upon the methods of effecting such
"increase";

and he also gave us the title of the "Agricultural Policy Sub-Committee" of the Reconstruction Committee.

2. We desire at the outset to explain that we were informed that the question asked us did not refer to war but to post-war conditions, and our Report is drawn up from that point of view only. Nevertheless, it is evident that for some time after the War agriculture must be seriously affected by the conditions which have prevailed during the War. Any inducements and assistance, which the farmers receive now to keep their fields cultivated, or to cultivate additional land, will bear fruit in the post-war period, and may even be considered as direct steps towards the object we have in view. We trust, therefore, that we shall not be considered to have passed beyond our legitimate subject when we express our conviction that farmers need and deserve all the help and encouragement which His Majesty's Government can possibly give them at the present time.

3. The experience of the War has shown that the dependence of the United Kingdom on imported food has already involved the country in special difficulties, and in the future may become a source of real danger. We have found that it has increased the cost of the War; aggravated the difficult problem of regulating foreign exchange; and absorbed an undue proportion of the tonnage of the mercantile marine at a time when its services have been so sorely needed for other purposes. We are conscious also of the possibility of a development in the construction of submarines which in a future war might make impossible a continuous supply of food to the people of the United Kingdom from overseas. We hope and pray that the greater unity of nations and their increased obedience to the Divine law may save our country from any repetition of the hideous catastrophe which has to-day overwhelmed Europe, but we can feel no positive assurance that this will be the case, and we do not think that we should be faithful to our trust for our descendants if we omitted to take any practicable measures to increase the national safety in a future time of need. We can well imagine that in some future struggle the comparative independence of the United Kingdom of a supply of food from overseas might be a determining factor of victory. Apart from these grave considerations, it is evident that, after the War, the financial and physical welfare of the country will demand that the productive capacity of the soil should be developed to the fullest extent. Burdened with a huge debt, the nation will be strongly interested in producing as much as possible of its food at home, in order that it may buy as little as possible abroad. Exhausted in man power, it will find in the expansion of the rural population of these islands the best restorative of its vitality and creative energy.

4. We have approached the problem entrusted to us exclusively from the point of view of national security and welfare, and we have endeavoured to formulate a scheme of agricultural policy which may be generally accepted by the nation and adhered to through a long course of years.

EFFECTS OF THE AGRICULTURAL DEPRESSION.

5. At the beginning of the 18th century the United Kingdom relied upon its own production of wheat to feed its population with bread. At the beginning of the 19th century it produced enough wheat to supply far the greater part of its population, but had become dependent upon imports for supplying the remainder. At the beginning of the 20th century it had become dependent upon imported wheat to the extent of four-fifths of its consumption. In 1854 it was still very largely self-supporting in the matter of wheat, but the period between 1854 and 1874 was, on the whole, one of national prosperity, in which the population increased rapidly and the imports of food necessary to support it increased in proportion. The nation lost grip of the conviction which had been present to an earlier generation, that it was a matter of importance that the food which it ate should, as far as possible, be grown within its own borders, and not to an undue proportion be imported from overseas, and gradually farmer farmed his land than it had in the designs which a jeweller adopted for his jewellery. The years 1870 to 1878 were not years of agricultural depression, and in these a farmer, who kept his land under the plough and grew cereal crops made fair profit. Nevertheless, in 1873 the area of arable land in England and Wales decreased by 222,000 acres, while the area of permanent grass increased in proportion; and the process of conversion continued without interruption, though at a slower rate, up till the year 1879. The reason for this was that, although arable cultivation paid, meat and milk were often more profitable than

corn, and that grass farming, while involving less risks to the farmer from the seasons, brought in equal or greater profits with less trouble and anxiety.*

6. In the years following 1875, there commenced a period of agricultural depression which in varying degrees of acuteness lasted till 1907. Before 1876 our deficiencies in wheat were in the main supplied from Northern Europe, a region affected generally by the same climatic changes as the British Isles. It, therefore, came to pass that in bad seasons wheat was imported into the United Kingdom, broadly speaking, at United Kingdom prices, which in such circumstances were high prices. But after 1876, our deficiencies in wheat were in the main supplied from North America, where the climatic conditions were wholly different, and where bumper crops were often produced in seasons which were bad in Europe. So it happened that after 1879, when a considerable proportion of the seasons were bad, instead of high prices accompanying bad seasons, prices steadily fell. In the 'seventies the average price of wheat had been over 56s. a quarter; by 1885 wheat had fallen to 32s. 10d., and oats to 20s. 7d. a quarter in England and Wales; in 1894, wheat fell to 22s. 10d. a quarter, and in 1895 oats fell to 14s. 6d. It is doubtful whether enough attention has been given to this period of depression or its effects. The loss it entailed in the capital invested in the cultivation of the land by landowners and farmers and of the wages of labourers was prodigious. The Royal Commission on Agriculture appointed in 1893 on the advice of the Rt. Hon. H. H. Asquith, M.P., when Home Secretary, reported that the Chairman of the Inland Revenue had calculated that between the years 1875 and 1894 there had been a decline in the capital value of the agricultural land of Great Britain of £834,000,000, or 50 per cent. The agricultural depression continued for some years after 1894, and this estimate included nothing for the loss of capital of farmers nor of the wages of labourers, nor is there any exact method by which a calculation of that loss can be made. What is certain is that the number of farmers who were ruined was large, and that on many farms several farmers were ruined in succession. For instance, the number of bankruptcies among farmers rose to 523 in 1893, 518 in 1894, and 564 in 1895 (after which year the figures fell steadily), and in those three years alone the liabilities of those bankrupt farmers amounted to over £2,000,000. Moreover, the wages of agricultural labourers fell, and in England and Wales it was not for twenty years that the level of the latter half of the 'seventies was again reached. The classes thus cruelly stricken met the crisis with indomitable pluck. The farmers stuck to their farms so long as any capital was left to them; the landowners were generous in their remissions of rent and, generally speaking, helped their tenants by every means in their power; where no one could be found to take the land, the landowners endeavoured to farm it themselves. Holdings were often thrown together as the only means of keeping the land in cultivation. It is a fact that many farms in the country were kept in cultivation and the labourers in employment by the farmers and the landowners, at a steadily recurring annual loss to themselves. Many families would be permanently better off to-day if their fathers had at that time allowed the land to go out of cultivation; but the idea was abhorrent to them, and they sacrificed their capital rather than see this happen and the labourers lose their employment. That agriculture, when the tide turned and prices began once more to become remunerative, was in any degree in a position to take advantage of the change, was due to the sacrifices of the labourers and farmers and landowners of that generation.

7. The effect of the depression on arable cultivation was marked. In 1875 there had been a decrease in England and Wales of 47,000 acres of arable, in 1879 the decrease was 151,000 acres, and in 1880 159,000 acres; the process of change from arable to grass, which had begun during the period of prosperity in the 'seventies, received a disastrous stimulus, and has continued ever since at the average rate of, approximately, 100,000 acres a year. Since the year 1870, something like 4,000,000 acres of land have been converted from arable to grass. The word "converted," however, requires some explanation and expansion. On the one hand, much of the land was put down to grass by farmers and landowners with care and according to the best practice of the time; on the other hand, much of it was never put down to grass by any agricultural process whatever. It was allowed to revert to grass by the processes of nature, and it is not surprising that a large proportion of the land which was thus allowed to tumble down to so-called pasture is of little value as grass. In addition, a considerable amount of land in certain special districts, such as Essex, became actually derelict, that is, no one pretended to farm it at all, and it reverted to the forest conditions of primitive England. The land became clothed with a dense growth of bramble, briar, thorn and gorse, in which forest trees gradually showed themselves, and some of that land is in that condition to-day. It is not wonderful that, in these circumstances, capital and brains fled from agriculture whenever they were mobile and could see an opening of a more profitable kind, or that, as the older generation of farmers died out, the land often passed into the hands of less capable and energetic men, and oftener still into the hands of men who had quite insufficient capital for the acreage of land which they attempted to farm, or that between 1881 and 1901 the number of persons engaged in agriculture in Great Britain decreased from 1,410,454 to 1,135,040, and in Ireland from 1,111,560 to 965,274.† (See Appendix IV. to this Report.)

8. The price of wheat in England and Wales, which was 22s. 10d. a quarter in 1894, rose to 30s. 2d. in 1897, and to 34s. in 1898 (the years of the Spanish-American War in which it was attempted to "corner" wheat in the United States of America), but sank again to 25s. 8d. in 1899, and did not reach 30s. again till 1907, since which year it has never sunk below that figure. For the seven years ending with 1913, the average price was 32s. 9d. It may be said, therefore, that by 1907 the period of depression had begun to pass away, and there is no doubt that for several years before the War capable and energetic farmers of arable land possessed of sufficient capital were making their industry pay. But, nevertheless, the process of conversion of arable land to pasture was interrupted only in the single year 1912,

* See "English Farming, Past and Present," by B. E. Prothero, p. 371.

† In 1911 it had risen again to 1,175,154 in Great Britain, but further fallen in Ireland to 902,692.

und, in 1913, the year immediately before the War, the diminution of the acreage of arable land in England and Wales was no less than 277,000 acres. It is of great importance that this fact should be noted and its significance understood. Notwithstanding the proved possibility of obtaining good returns from arable land by good farming, the decrease of the arable land of the country was still going on at a disastrous rate.

9. There has been no process of corresponding importance in Scotland. For instance, in England and Wales* in the year 1870, there were 14,849,000 acres of arable; in the year 1915 there were 10,966,000, or a decrease in round figures of 4,000,000 acres of arable; in Ireland in 1870 there were 5,661,610, and in 1915 there were 4,998,993 acres of arable—a decrease of 660,000 acres. In Scotland in 1870 there were 3,486,000 acres of arable, and in 1915 there were 3,200,000, or a decrease of about 200,000 acres of arable. The corresponding movement in Scotland took the form of a longer rotation, in which the temporary lea was left unploughed for several years in succession, of course with the result of a corresponding decrease in the production of cereals. The question will at once be asked, why this process of conversion from arable to grass went on unchecked. The answer is, because all confidence in the stability of agricultural conditions had been destroyed by the cruel experience of the depression, and because agriculture had again become the battleground of politicians. Just as during the prosperous years of the early 'seventies some farmers had taken to grass instead of arable farming because it involved them in less risk from bad seasons, so in the years of reviving prosperity before the present war many farmers persisted in the process of converting arable land into pasture because it involved them in less risk from bad seasons, from bad prices, and from political experiments. No one in 1875 had foreseen or predicted that within 20 years wheat would fall to 22s. 10d. a quarter. Farmers accordingly felt no confidence in any assurances which they received that good prices had come to stay, and, therefore, they were determined to diminish their risks to the utmost, and they were quite justified in doing so. They had no confidence whatever that they might not be faced by another period of depression; they believed that the State would not give them any assistance in such a period, and they and their landlords naturally took such measures as were open to them to ensure themselves in advance against part of its consequences.

10. The effect of the period of depression on the investment of capital in agricultural land must also be noted. In the 'sixties and 'seventies the agricultural landowners had invested capital freely in the industrial equipment of the land—in farm-buildings, farmhouses, cottages, drains, roads and fences—but that capital had often been borrowed for the purpose. The interest received from this investment of capital in all cases diminished, and in many cases disappeared, in the period of agricultural depression. It is not wonderful, therefore, that those professions whose advice is sought in such matters—collectors, bankers, land-agents—thought it their duty to discourage as much as possible the investment of fresh capital in agricultural land. As for the money market, it wrote down English agricultural land as a field of investment to be shunned by all sensible persons. In these circumstances, it shows commendable enterprise on the part of the landowners that they continued to find for permanent improvements in the bad years as much capital as is recorded in the Report of the Royal Commission of 1893 on Agricultural Depression.

NEED FOR A NEW AGRICULTURAL POLICY.

11. British agriculture was in this position when war broke out in August, 1914. In the previous year, 1913, the value of the foodstuffs (excluding sugar) which were imported into the United Kingdom from overseas, though capable of production within these islands, was about £200,000,000. One reading of the question put to us in our reference might be: "What proportion of this importation could be produced in the United Kingdom, and by what means?" We have no hesitation in replying that by the adoption of a complete policy by the State, and by consistent persistence in it, a large proportion of this importation could be produced in the United Kingdom, and that a large addition might be made to the production of cereals and potatoes, not only without a diminution of the production of milk and meat, but with an actual accompanying increase of that production. In committing ourselves to this statement, we are not only expressing our own opinion, but we are expressing the opinion of every authority whom we have consulted.

12. We commend to the study of all interested in these questions the parliamentary paper (Cd. 8505), 1916, "The Recent Development of German Agriculture," by Mr. T. H. Middleton, C.B., Assistant Secretary to the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries.† It will be sufficient here to quote the following statements from page 6:—

"On each hundred acres of cultivated land:—

- "1. The British farmer feeds from 45 to 50 persons, the German farmer feeds from 70 to 75 persons.
- "2. The British farmer grows 15 tons of corn, the German farmer grows 33 tons.
- "3. The British farmer grows 11 tons of potatoes, the German farmer grows 55 tons.
- "4. The British farmer produces 4 tons of meat, the German farmer produces 4½ tons.

* The arable area in England alone was 13,729,000 acres in 1870 and 10,273,000 acres in 1915, a reduction of nearly 3,500,000 acres. The similar figures for Wales are 1,120,000 and 693,000, a reduction of 427,000 acres.
† See also "Agriculture after the War," by Mr. A. D. Hall F.R.S. (John Murray, 1916), particularly Chapter V.

country must be permeated with a complete system of agricultural education; the status of the departments of agriculture must be improved and their powers enlarged and reinforced by association with existing agricultural and administrative bodies, both national and local. All these questions and others of much importance, such as Reclamation, the incidence of Local Taxation, Credit, the working of the Agricultural Holdings Act, &c., &c., will be dealt with in our Report, which will present a scheme of agricultural policy as one whole; but we think it our duty to put in the forefront our conviction that a basis of security and stability of the conditions under which agriculture is to be carried on in the future must be the foundation of the whole structure, and that without it the increase of production, which we predict, cannot be realised.

20. We are of opinion that the conditions of agriculture must be made so stable that out of its profits the agricultural labourer can be assured a fair wage, the cultivator of the soil a fair return for his capital, energy, and brains, and the landowner a fair return for the capital invested in the land, and we believe that this stability can never exist so long as there is a possibility of a recurrence of the prices of the late period of depression.

21. We recommend that the State should fix a minimum wage for the ordinary agricultural labourer in each county, guarantee to the farmer a minimum price for wheat and oats, and take steps, as set forth in later paragraphs, to secure the increase of production which is the object of the guarantee. The cereal crops are the pivot of agriculture, and we do not consider that dairy and stock farming will in any way be prejudiced by our proposals. Moreover, as we have already stated, these very important branches of the agricultural industry can be more, not less, advantageously conducted on arable land than on grass land. In the United Kingdom there is land so adapted to pasture that its retention in grass can be defended on economic grounds. There is also grass land the soil of which is a clay so sticky that in the climate of these islands under the plough "a season can only be got upon it" once in three or four years; and there is other land where the climatic conditions render the harvest precarious. It would be useless to plough such land. Of the remaining grass land a large proportion could be ploughed up with advantage to the farmer the landowner and the State. The interests of the State demand that more land should be put under the plough, and any landowner and dairy or stock farmer, who chooses to convert part of his grass land into arable, could at once obtain the benefit of the guarantee and at the same time increase the output of his particular products.

22. We have no authority to consider the fiscal policy of the country as a whole; our reference, though a very important one, is strictly limited, and we shall confine our Report to an answer to it. At the same time we think it right to put on record our opinion that, if the State, for reasons of general policy, were to adopt a tariff on manufactured goods, then a tariff corresponding in degree (with the necessary differentiations between the products of the Empire, of allied, and of other countries) should be imposed on imported foodstuffs such as dairy produce meat and corn, and that special consideration should be shown to the produce of the more intensive forms of agriculture (of which fruit and hops and flax may be cited as examples), where the capital invested, and the annual expenditure in cultivation, and the proportion of that expenditure on labour, are particularly large.

23. Wheat and oats are the two cereals which are most important from the point of view of human food. Much land in Ireland and Scotland and Wales and the north of England can in normal times be more profitably employed to grow oats than wheat. What the State wants is more land under the plough, and, if the guarantee be given for oats as well as for wheat, without doubt more land will be put under the plough than if the guarantee be given for wheat only. In times of emergency much of the oat land could be made to grow wheat, and we, therefore, recommend that the guarantee should be given in respect of oats as well as wheat. We have after full consideration decided that a guarantee may be dispensed with as regards the barley crop. The operation of the guarantee is intended to encourage in the first place the production of human food and in the second place the extension of the arable area. By securing a remunerative return for the wheat and oat crops it will become possible to bring under the plough all the land which should be ploughed, for there is probably no land in the British Isles which can grow neither wheat nor oats but can grow barley. For this reason we consider that arable farming will be sufficiently safeguarded without a guaranteed price for barley.

AGRICULTURAL WAGES.

24. The last exhaustive enquiry into the rates of agricultural wages was held by the Board of Trade for the year 1907*. At that time the average weekly earnings for all classes of agricultural labourers were estimated to be 18s. 4d. in England, 18s. in Wales and Monmouthshire, 19s. 7d. in Scotland, and 11s. 3d. in Ireland. These amounts include the estimated value of food or board and lodgings, when provided, and of all allowances in kind. The value of a cottage was taken as £4† per annum in England Wales and Scotland, and in Ireland as £2 12s. 6d. per annum. Board and lodging were computed at £20 16s. per annum in England, £17 in Wales, £20 in Scotland, and £13 in Ireland. The average earnings above stated do not represent the earnings during a given week but an average of the weekly earnings during the whole year.

25. The only statistics available since 1907 are based on the returns obtained annually by the Board of Trade direct from a small number of farmers,‡ and from the chairmen or

* Earnings and Hours Enquiry, Vol. V. Agriculture in 1907 (Cd. 5469).

† We consider this estimate to have been too low.

‡ England and Wales, 156 farms; Scotland, 98 farms; and Ireland, 27 farms.

clerks of rural district councils in England and Wales. On the basis of the former returns, which do not come down beyond the end of 1914, the increase in cash wages in England and Wales as between the end of 1907 and the end of 1914 had been 10·4 per cent., and in Ireland 12·9 per cent., the value of allowances in kind apparently remaining constant. In Scotland, where there was a tendency for the allowances in kind to be reduced and for the cash wages to be correspondingly increased, the value of total earnings was raised, during the same period, by 9·5 per cent. The returns from rural district councils in England and Wales, which come down to the beginning of 1916, show that between January, 1908, and January, 1916, the cash rates of wages in over 70 per cent. of the districts covered have increased by amounts between the limits 3s. and 7s.* The commonest rise may be put at 4s. or 5s. from an average cash rate of wages in 1907 of 14s. 9d. in England. In Wales, where the previous cash rate was higher (17s.), the rises have commonly been less (2s. to 3s.). Most of this increase has taken place during the War. Between 1907 and 1913 there had been an increase averaging about a shilling a week. In Ireland, where the average cash rate in 1907 was 10s. 3d. per week, the increase in cash rates since that date has, in 65 per cent. of the districts covered by the returns, been between 3s. and 7s., and in 11 per cent. of the districts the rise has been less than 2s. per week. As in England and Wales, the greater part of the increase has taken place since the War, although for several years previously there had been an upward movement in agricultural wages in Ireland. The above figures indicate that throughout the United Kingdom there had been a slow rise in agricultural wages before the War, and that a rapid rise has taken place during the War.

26. We recommend that Wage Boards should be set up for each administrative county in Great Britain; or, if they thought it desirable, after consulting local opinion, the Government Departments concerned (which in this case should be the Boards of Agriculture) might constitute one Board for two or more administrative counties or for parts of two or more counties. We consider that every opportunity should be given for Wage Boards in neighbouring counties to confer together, and, if they think fit, to submit joint reports. On the other hand each Board should be authorised to make different recommendations for different parts of its area, if it thinks it desirable. In some counties the wages generally paid would no doubt be found to be equal to, or more than, the minimum fixed by the Wage Board, and in these cases it would only be necessary to ensure that individual farmers did not continue to pay less than the approved minimum.

27. The Wage Boards should be constituted on the lines of the existing Trade Boards, and should consist of equal numbers of representatives of the agricultural employers and labourers in the area (say ten of each), with a smaller number of members (say six) appointed by the Agricultural Department concerned, by which also the Chairman would, in each case, be nominated. Some of the "appointed members" and the Chairman might be common to a group of Wage Boards, so that they might, in the course of time, gain wide experience of the problems to be solved, and the way in which their solution could most easily be achieved. The remaining appointed members on each Board might be persons familiar with the county, including landowners and agents. The selection of the workers' representatives will, in the agricultural industry, where the labourers are in most parts unorganised, present some difficulty; but the same difficulty has been encountered and overcome by the Board of Trade in setting up some of the existing Trade Boards, and we have been informed that in many, and an increasing number of cases, the workers prefer that the Board of Trade should, after enquiry, nominate their representatives rather than that they should be asked themselves to elect them.

28. The duty of a Wage Board should be to report to the Agricultural Department concerned that a certain weekly wage should be adopted as the minimum for ordinary agricultural labourers throughout the whole of its district, or, as already indicated, differing minima for different parts of its district. The Agricultural Department should have power to adopt the rate suggested and to give it statutory effect and to promulgate it, or to remit its Report to the Wage Board for further consideration. After the rate had been promulgated, and a certain interval (say three months) had elapsed, it should become illegal for any farmer in that area to pay any workman employed by time (unless he were specially exempted on account of age or infirmity) a lower wage than the approved minimum. It would not be possible for Wage Boards in all cases to fix the rates for harvest work or for piece work, because they have often to be varied according to the weather, the soil and the state of the crop. But it follows necessarily from the establishment of a minimum wage that the rates agreed upon between the farmers and labourers must be such as will enable an ordinary labourer doing an ordinary week's work to earn at least the legal minimum wage. An old or infirm man should be paid at the general piece rate but might earn less than the legal minimum owing to his age or infirmity. Arrangements should be made for old infirm and disabled workmen, of whom there are relatively large numbers employed on the land, and for women and boys being paid less than the minimum time rate fixed for ordinary labourers. It has been asserted that the result of the enactment of a minimum weekly wage for agriculture may be that farmers will object to pay the minimum wage during the winter months and during spells of bad weather, and, on this account, will reduce their permanent staffs and rely more than they do at present on securing seasonal employees during the busy seasons. We consider that any such result would be exceedingly harmful to agriculture and to the nation generally, and that the Agricultural Departments should be instructed to watch carefully the working of the statutory rates and do everything in their power to check any tendency to such a practice.

* Official figures showing the movement of wages since January, 1916, are not available. We believe, however, that the rise in agricultural wages recorded above was not only confined in 1916, but was greater in that year than in the preceding one.

29. The earnings of agricultural labourers in all parts of the United Kingdom, but more notably in certain districts, include payments in kind. Often it would not be to the advantage of the agricultural labourer if the effect of minimum wage legislation were to encourage farmers to convert these payments into cash, and we think that the Wage Boards should be cautious in dealing with these allowances. The Boards might be required to include in their schemes for fixing a minimum wage a scale by which any allowances in respect of milk, meal, &c., which are made to employees according to local custom, could be valued as part of the total earnings. In this connection it is instructive to observe that the Trade Boards have succeeded in fixing minimum rates in trades in which payment by the employer covers the cost of materials supplied by the worker as well as wages (for example, in tailoring, where the workers provide needles and thread, and in chain-making, where homeworkers provide tools and fuel), and we are of opinion that the difficulty of assessing the value of allowances in kind in the agricultural industry will not be beyond the capacity of the Agricultural Wage Boards.

30. We are of opinion that the system by which an agricultural labourer receives part of his emoluments in the shape of a low rented cottage is a bad one, and we hope that the establishment of a minimum wage will gradually lead to its abandonment. We look forward to the time when every agricultural labourer who rents a cottage will pay the full economic rent and rates and receive such wages in cash as will enable him to do so. But we are aware that custom dies hard in the country districts, and that for some time to come large numbers of farm servants will continue to live in cottages let to them at rents which are uneconomic and in some cases merely nominal. We consider, therefore, that in fixing minimum rates of wages, the Wage Boards should be required to calculate for a full economic rent for a good cottage being paid by the workmen, and should fix the maximum amount which a farmer would be entitled to deduct from agricultural wages for such rent. In the event of a workman being housed in an inferior cottage, he would be in a position to claim a reduction in rent, and thus be compensated for his inferior accommodation by receiving a larger cash wage. The system of "tied" cottages has met with much criticism, but we fail to see how farming could be carried on on many farms, especially those remote from villages, if the cottages specially erected on or near the holding were not reserved for occupation by the men employed on the farm.

31. We have anxiously considered whether we could not advise that in appointing the Wage Boards the Agricultural Departments should inform them that no recommendation would be accepted for the establishment in any county of a minimum wage below a certain amount. The effect of this action would be to proclaim to the demobilised sailors and soldiers and to all agricultural labourers that under no circumstances would they be asked to accept a lower weekly wage in agriculture than the figure named. We have, however, reluctantly decided that at the present time we are unable to recommend a specific figure, in view of the extraordinary divergence of conditions in different parts of Great Britain, and of the fact that agricultural wages are still rising, and of our necessary ignorance of the comparative values which will exist on the declaration of peace. We shall, however, continue to study the question, and shall not hesitate to make further recommendations on the subject in a later part of our Report if the governing factors of the situation become sufficiently plain to enable us to do so.

32. In view of the fact that our Irish colleagues have only been recently appointed, and that we have not yet had an opportunity of considering the very special circumstances of Ireland, we wish it to be understood that we make these recommendations only in respect of Great Britain.

PRICE OF WHEAT AND OATS.

33. We have thought it essential, in considering the minimum price which should be guaranteed for wheat, to give careful consideration not merely to the cost of wheat production but also to the profits derivable from other systems of cultivation. If, as we anticipate, the cost of labour, which is relatively much higher on arable farms than on grass farms, is considerably greater after the War than it was in 1914, and other outgoings are also increased as appears now to be probable, the lowest figure at which, in our opinion, a guaranteed minimum price would be likely to give farmers a reasonable security against loss in growing wheat is 42s. a quarter. Similar considerations have led us to the conclusion that 23s. a quarter should be guaranteed as a minimum price for oats. These figures will certainly be regarded by many members of the agricultural community as too low, but we consider them sufficient to effect the sole object at which we have aimed, namely a sense of security for the cultivator of arable land. They certainly would not afford a justification for any attempt in times of peace to fix maximum prices for wheat or oats nor for requisitions of corn grown in the United Kingdom at any figure fixed at less than the market price. Our recommendations, however, are necessarily made with no certain knowledge of what will be the standard of values after the War, and when that standard is known, it may be necessary for His Majesty's Government to revise them in the light of ascertained facts. We suggest no period for the duration of this guarantee because, in our opinion, it can never be compatible with national security, so long as wars are possible, to deprive agriculture of that stability of cereal prices on which we have insisted.

34. It is, in our opinion, very important that the process of conversion of grass to arable should be commenced as soon as labour is available and other conditions permit, and we think that it would be short-sighted policy on the part of the State to omit the offer of whatever inducement may be necessary to overcome the inevitable reluctance of farmers to commence the operation. In view of the uncertainty that must prevail as to the movement of values in the period immediately after the War, and, again, of our ignorance of the effects

of the measures now about to be taken to increase production, we hesitate to suggest figures for the prices which should be guaranteed for the first two years after the conclusion of peace, but we consider that they should be at least comparable to the prices ruling during the War itself. We do not believe that this initiatory increase of the guarantee will involve any charge upon the Exchequer, as prices will, in our opinion, continue to rule high for some years after the War, but many farmers do not share this belief, and may otherwise feel nervous of incurring the initial expense of breaking up land. The impetus which this temporary additional guarantee would give to the policy of the plough will be well worth the risk of a temporary additional charge if our forecast of prices should prove to be erroneous.

35. The method by which payments under the suggested guarantee should be made remains to be considered. We endorse the recommendation of the Departmental Committee* presided over by Lord Milner in 1915, that the farmer should receive the difference between the guaranteed price of a quarter of wheat (480 lbs.†) or of a quarter of oats (332 lbs.†) and the "Gazette" average price for the year in which the crop is harvested. This system has the advantage that it leaves the grower free to dispose of his crop when he wishes in the open market, and that the State action in guaranteeing a minimum price to the farmer does not raise the cost of the produce to the consumer. At the same time the farmer is able to benefit by improvements in the quality of his produce, and by taking advantage of any fluctuations in the market price. For example, if the "Gazette" average price was 38s. and the guaranteed minimum 42s., every wheat grower would be entitled to claim 4s. for each quarter of wheat he threshed, regardless of whether he had realised 40s. or 35s. for his produce.

36. The determination of the quantity of wheat and oats on which each farmer will be entitled to claim, in the event of the market price falling below the amount of the guarantee, will involve some difficulty. As the object of the State will be to encourage increased production, we regard it as essential that payment should be based on (a) the number of quarters actually harvested, so far as this can be estimated, not on the number of acres sown, and (b) the whole of the farmer's production regardless of the amount consumed on the farm. Most of the wheat and oats grown in England, Wales and Ireland is threshed by machines which travel from farm to farm; but in Scotland, and to a certain extent in the North of England, the case is different, as it is a common practice for both wheat and oats to be threshed by mills belonging to the farm. Another complication in the case of oats is that this crop, unlike wheat, which is nearly all sold off the farm, is disposed of in various ways. Some is marketed, some is fed to stock on the farm, some is milled for consumption at the farmhouse and for payment in kind to farm servants.

37. On the one hand it is important that all unnecessary complications and the necessarily costly intervention of officials should be as much as possible avoided, on the other it is essential that the Public Exchequer should be protected from fraud. We recommend that every farmer who desires to claim the benefit of the guarantee should be required either:—

- (a) to use a threshing machine which has been duly licensed‡ for hire, the firm to which the machine belongs being made responsible for providing the farmer with a true certificate of the number of quarters of corn of the required weight threshed; or
- (b) if he does not propose to use a hired machine, to give notice to that effect to the Board or Department of Agriculture some time before harvest in order that the yield of his standing crop may be estimated by a government valuer whose fee and expenses he should repay to the Board or Department of Agriculture. If he considered that his crop had been under-estimated, he could still have resort to the test of a public threshing machine.

Any farmer desiring to claim the benefit of the guarantee should send in his certificates of threshing, or the estimate of the Government valuer, to the Board or Department of Agriculture, by which they should be checked and the sum found due be paid to the farmer.

38. An alternative plan which, in the long run, might easily be the cheapest, might be adopted in the place of that described in para. 37 (b). The Board or Department of Agriculture might, under carefully devised regulations, accept the certificate of the farmer as to the amount of wheat or oats which he had threshed on any given day when he had obtained the counter signature of some official or person of repute resident in the parish and authorised for that purpose by the Board or Department of Agriculture. If the officials of the Board or Department of Agriculture checked the threshing returns sent in by the farmers with their crop returns,§ and if they had the right of access, as they should have, at any time to the farm and farm premises of any farmer claiming the benefit of the guarantee, it is probable that they would soon become aware, from information acquired in the ordinary discharge of their duties, of the existence of fraud, the penalty for conviction for which should be very severe.

39. The calculation of the possible cost of our recommendation is easily made. It would cost £50,000 a year for every million quarters of wheat grown for every shilling by which the average market price of wheat fell below 42s., and £50,000 a year for every million quarters

* Cd. 8048, para. 7.

† The "Gazette" average price, under Section 8 of the Corn Returns Act, 1882, is for a quarter of 8 imperial bushels, at the rate of 60 imperial pounds for every bushel of wheat, and 30 imperial pounds for every bushel of oats.

‡ The Boards and Department of Agriculture should issue licences, free of charge, to reliable firms letting out threshing machines for hire, authorising them to issue certificates for this purpose, and should supply them with the necessary forms, instructions, &c. In the event of any mismanagement the licence should be liable to forfeiture.

§ The annual returns to the Board and Department of Agriculture of crop and stock statistics, which are now voluntary, should be made compulsory.

of oats grown for every shilling by which the average market price of oats fell below 25s. At the present moment about seven million quarters of wheat are grown in the United Kingdom, and thirty-five million quarters consumed, and the price of wheat is about 75s. per 480 lbs.; about twenty million quarters of oats are grown and twenty-seven million quarters consumed, and the price of oats is about 50s. per 312 lbs.

40. We have not dealt with our subject with the purpose of increasing the farmer's profits; we have dealt with it solely with the object of making it possible for him to respond to the national need and plough up more land. He cannot so respond unless he is secured in advance against the ruin which would certainly overtake him if he ploughed up his land and prices fell once again to the 1894-1895 level. It may be that for several years after the present war, prices will rule considerably higher than the guarantee we have named, and that those farmers who grow wheat and oats will make a handsome profit. But the uncertain prospect of such profits will not induce the farmer to plough up his existing grass, nor deter him from laying down more arable to grass.

41. We are convinced that the process of conversion of arable to grass will recommence immediately after the War notwithstanding high prices, unless the farmer is assured against a recurrence of the prices of 1894-5. It may be improbable that those prices will recur, but after his previous experience more probabilities will have no weight with the farmer. He knows that no one foresees the previous fall of price, that if he is caught by such a fall with his land under the plough he will probably become bankrupt, and that if he can become a grazier, or dairy farmer on grass land, whatever else happens to him, he will escape ruin from any sudden fall in the price of cereals. He will, therefore, almost every time plump for the least risk. This is the explanation of the persistent diminution of the area of arable land. For its own safety and welfare the State wants more plough land, but it cannot ask the farmer to do that which might ruin him unless it assures him in advance against the operation of the same cause that ruined his predecessor. That is why the guarantee is so essential to agricultural stability. When once that has been given, the whole atmosphere in which the farmer works will be changed; all excuse for lack of enterprise will have been removed; no valid excuse can be made for not paying the agricultural labourer a higher wage than that too often prevalent before the War. It is quite true that in the old days of high wheat prices the wages of agricultural labourers were often miserably low, and that in some districts they were still too low before the War. But it is also true that those wages were, on the average, higher in 1875 than they were again till 1899, and that they would have risen much sooner than they did if it had not been for the period of depression; also that, if the price of wheat fell again to the 1894 level, it would be quite impossible to maintain a decent wage, or even employment, for the ploughman. On the other hand, it is quite impossible for the farmer ever again to make fair profits year after year and continue to pay bad wages. The twentieth century is not the nineteenth, and public opinion knows too much to tolerate it. Nor would the agricultural labourer himself for one moment again submit to such treatment. After this War the men would not go back to work on the land for such wages as existed in some places before the War. They would go elsewhere, to the new lands of the Dominions, or to the towns. The guarantee of a living wage is essential as an assurance to these men that they are to have a fair share of the profits of agriculture, to attract them back to the land, and to avert their exodus. The plough policy which the nation needs for its safety cannot fructify without the co-operation of both farmers and agricultural labourers, and both classes are justified in asking in advance for such security in the conditions of life as it is in the power of the State to give.

42. We do not think it necessary to set forth at length the theoretical arguments for or against a guarantee as compared with a duty as a means of encouraging arable cultivation within the United Kingdom. The reasons which induce us to recommend a guarantee at the present moment are purely practical. For the reasons we have given, we think that farmers may fairly be urged, and, if need be, compelled, to grow wheat and oats if they are assured of a minimum price of 42s. and 23s. a quarter respectively. But if assistance to the arable farmer were to be given to him by the operation of a duty, that duty would need to be as high as 17s. a quarter if it had to maintain the price of wheat at 42s. per quarter whenever the world price fell to 25s. as it did as recently as 1894. Experience has shown a sliding scale of duty to work injuriously to national interests. Therefore, whatever the market price of wheat to-day, the duty on wheat would have to be a fixed one of 17s. a quarter, if the farmer is to be secured by that means against a recurrence of that fall of price of which he lives in so much dread. In our opinion the world price of wheat is likely, for some years after the War, to stand at over 42s. a quarter. The effect of a standing duty as high as 17s. might be to raise the price of all the wheat consumed in the United Kingdom to a scale which could not be defended, and the resentment to which it would give rise would end in the repeal of the duty and the destruction of that stability of conditions which is essential to the increase of the home production of wheat. But if stability is secured by means of a guarantee, no difficulty of the kind would follow from the continuance of high prices after the War. Whatever the world price of wheat was that would be what the citizen, in his capacity of consumer, would have to pay, whether it was above or below 42s. a quarter. So long as the world price did not fall below 42s. a quarter, the citizen, in his capacity as taxpayer, would have to pay nothing to the British or Irish farmer in fulfilment of his guarantee. But it is possible that in the course of a few years the world price of wheat may fall below 42s. a quarter, and in that event the citizen, as taxpayer, would have to pay to the farmers the difference between the world price, whatever it was, and 42s. a quarter for the wheat grown in the United Kingdom, while, as consumer, he would still be getting his bread at the cheapest possible rate.

43. The objection has been made to us that some seven million quarters of wheat were being grown in the United Kingdom before the War, when wheat was, on the average of the seven years ending 1913, 32s. 9d. a quarter; that presumably the farmers who grew that wheat were growing it at a profit; and that it is an unreasonable thing to ask the nation to add to those farmers' profits by guaranteeing them 42s., instead of 32s. 9d. a quarter. This objection ignores the fact that the cost of production will be higher after the War and that there is no presumption that wheat growing is generally profitable at 32s. 9d. a quarter to be found in the fact that in 1913 some seven million quarters were grown and sold at about that price. A larger, not smaller, number of quarters of wheat were grown in 1894 when the average market price was 22s. 10d. a quarter, and no one pretends that wheat can by any possibility be grown with a profit at such a figure. Then why was a certain amount of wheat grown at prices which did not pay? The answer is to be found in the extreme tenacity of agricultural custom, in the great inconvenience which many farmers experience if they are altogether deprived of wheat straw for bedding and for thatching, and in some farmers' constant hope of better prices.

44. But, although the fact that a farmer grew wheat in 1913 is no proof that it paid him to do so, it is certainly true that the best farmers were then making a profit by growing it on suitable land. The best farmers will always make the best profits in all circumstances, and it would scarcely be wise of the State to exclude from the advantage of a guarantee only those farmers who had shown the most enterprise and skill without a guarantee. It would not be prudent policy to offer encouragement and security only to those who had grown so wheat at the time when the nation most needed it. Either the nation does not require more wheat to be grown at home for its own security and welfare, or it does. If it does not, then our reference is misleading, our opinions are erroneous, and this Report is waste paper. If it does, it is not a valid objection to a guarantee that the best farmers in the country may some day make greater profits than they would otherwise have done. They are just the men who will make the best use of the security given under the guarantee by putting more land under the plough, and by making every acre of land under the plough yield more and more wheat. So long as they pay fair wages their prosperity is to the advantage of the nation. With the increased cost of production after the War, the chance of deriving an excessive profit from the sale of wheat at 42s. a quarter seems to be remote, but if there should be these exceptional cases the Chancellor of the Exchequer may be trusted to find a method for dealing with them.

45. A more serious difficulty consists in the fact that, until the reasons which justify it are understood, the policy which we recommend will be thoroughly unpopular with many landowners and farmers. They have tinned their farms down to grass, they do not grow corn and do not wish to do so, and they do not ask for a guarantee; they will not like the idea of a minimum standard wage, and all they ask is to be let alone. Their point of view is quite intelligible. They were, according to their opinion, completely neglected by the State in the period of their difficulties; they overcame those difficulties by their own skill; they found a new and less risky method of farming; and now they are asked to commence arable farming afresh! If, however, they once understand that the policy in which they are asked to join is necessary for the safety and welfare of the nation, the State can, we believe, confidently rely upon their co-operation. But in the case of many of the landowners the provision of fresh capital for cottages buildings and drainage will be a matter of real difficulty. We recommend that whatever assistance is given by the State to Public Utility Societies to build cottages should also be given to landowners associated into County Public Utility Societies for the purpose of the drainage and industrial equipment of agricultural land.

46. We now pass to the consideration of an important question,—Should a Land Court be established to adjust rent? It has been represented to us that, if the result of a guarantee should be to make farming more profitable than it otherwise would be, the increment of profit will, by a fixed law of political economy, find its way into the pockets of the landowners by way of increased rent. The result of a guarantee will be different in different cases; in some it would probably increase profits but by no means in all. What is certain is that the cost of production will be higher for the farmer than it was before the War; that experience shows that the law of political economy, to which reference has been made, works slowly; that many collateral influences disturb its working; and that no absolute forecast can be made of the exact effect of a given change of conditions on the standard of rent. Before the War, it was the general opinion of those who were familiar with the conditions of farming in England that a large proportion of English farms were under-rented. Evidence has been laid before us that this is not the case in Wales, and that in Scotland and in parts of the North of England, where the custom still largely prevails of putting vacant farms up to tender, there is probably no corresponding general discrepancy between the actual and the economic rent.

47. It is necessary to bear in mind the fact that in Great Britain the capital required for the cultivation of the land is generally found by two separate parties. The farmer finds the capital which forms the basis of the wage-fund and provides the live and dead stock and other essentials of husbandry. The landowner finds the capital which provides the land and its industrial equipment in the shape of farmhouses, farm-buildings, cottages, the drainage, or materials for the drainage, of the land, the principal fences, roads, and water supply. Moreover, in many cases the landowner has borne the cost of laying down the land to that very grass which henceforth the State may wish, for reasons of public policy, to see recovered into arable. The farmer will get the benefit of any fertility which may have been accumulated

in this ploughed-up grassland in the returns from his cereal crops. It will be fair that the landowner should get some return in the form of some increase of rent for this value which has been created by his expenditure. Again the rent which the landowner receives surely represents an interest of as much as five per cent. on the capital invested in the industrial equipment of the land and often includes no interest whatever on the capital value of the land itself. In the majority of cases the landowner receives a return in the form of rent on the capital represented by the value of the land and its industrial equipment taken together, which a manufacturer would consider an altogether uncommercial rate of interest. That this is so is not to the advantage of agriculture, or of the State, because it acts as a constant deterrent to the investment of capital in agriculture. The following paragraphs are extracted from page 28 of the Report of the Royal Commission on Agricultural Depression of 1893:—

"It is clear from the evidence which these estate accounts and other sources of information afford, that a considerable portion of the rental received by owners at the present time is merely a return for capital expended in equipping and furnishing the estate, and not rent for the land itself."

"Mr. J. S. Mill draws a clear distinction between rent which is payment for the original powers of the land and that part of rent which is a consideration for the use of the buildings, fences, &c. There can be little doubt that, measured by the standard which is laid down in the following passage, over a very considerable part of this country true rent has entirely vanished, since the owners are not receiving the ordinary interest upon the sum which it would cost to erect buildings, fences, &c., as good as those now existing:—

"Under the name of rent, many payments are commonly included, which are not a remuneration for the original powers of the land itself, but for capital expended on it. The additional rent which land yields in consequence of this outlay of capital should, in the opinion of some writers, be regarded as *profit*, not *rent*. The annual payment by a tenant almost always includes a consideration for the use of the buildings on a farm . . . not to speak of fences and the like. The landlord will ask, and the tenant will give for these whatever is sufficient to yield the ordinary profit, or rather the ordinary interest on the value, . . . i.e., not on what it cost to erect them, but on what it would cost to erect others as good; the tenant being bound in addition to leave them in as good repair, as he found them. . . . These buildings are as distinct a thing from the farm as the stock or the timber on it, . . . and what is paid for them can no more be called rent of land than a payment for cattle would be if it were the custom that the landlord should stock the farm for the tenant."*

In our opinion the present state of the case is still exactly the same as that thus briefly set forth.

48. The same Royal Commission carefully examined what the effect on agriculture of the establishment of a Land Court would be likely to be. The following paragraphs are extracted from pages 106, 107 and 109 of their Report:—

"But there is another and far more important consideration which convinces us that any legislation in the direction of fixity of tenure and judicial rents, so far from raising the standard of cultivation, would be fraught with very serious dangers to agriculture, and to all classes engaged in the cultivation of the soil. We cannot doubt that one of the first results of such legislation would be that the greater part, if not the whole of the permanent improvements on the great majority of farms would be left to be carried out exclusively by the tenants. We have already referred to the very large capital outlay on these improvements by landlords during the depression. It is incredible that the tenants would have been willing to carry out works of this magnitude at their own cost, or that if they had been willing they would have possessed the requisite capital to enable them to do so; while, if they had borrowed for the purpose, they would have fallen into the hands of mortgagees, who would have been less disposed to reduce the rate of interest than their landlords have been to reduce their rents. The greater part of the work would, we are convinced, have been left undone to the very serious detriment of the agriculture of the country."

"It should be noted here that in our opinion the three F's are inseparable, and that the adoption of either one of them would necessarily involve the acceptance of the other two. Some few of the witnesses who have appeared before us, and who have advocated drastic changes in the land tenure of the country, recognise the very serious mischiefs which would result from their complete adoption, and have apparently come to the conclusion that they might be diminished if a part only of that policy, consisting of one or two of the F's, were adopted. But, in our opinion, any such intermediate policy is impossible, and, if possible, would be indefensible. It would be no advantage to a tenant to have his rent fixed by any tribunal if his tenancy could be determined in the event of his landlord being dissatisfied with the finding of the tribunal. Nor would fixity of tenure be of any advantage to a tenant if the landlord were allowed to raise his rent at his own discretion. Nor, when a tenant's rent had been determined by the Court, and he had been given fixity of tenure, and he had in this way become a part owner in the land, is it easy to see on what grounds he could be debarred from exercising the right of every owner to dispose of his property by sale or bequest, especially if he had been compelled to expend his capital on the permanent improvement of his farm."

* Mill, "Political Economy," Book II, chvi. s. 5

† *Le Fair rent, Fixity of tenure, and Free sale.*

49. We are quite aware, as were the members of the Royal Commission, that there are cases of real hardship in the treatment of tenant farmers by their landlords, such as all fair-minded men would unite to condemn, and it is also true that farmers developing special lines of business sometimes meet with scanty encouragement from their landlords; but both these classes of cases are exceptional, and we see no reason to differ from the conclusions of the Royal Commission or to consider them otherwise than sound and equally applicable now as then. As regards ordinary farming and the majority of tenancies, there is evidence to show that the tenant farmer possesses a much greater security of tenure than would be warranted by the fact that in England, at any rate, by his own choice his tenancy is usually an annual one. We do not, therefore, consider that any general measure conferring "security of tenure" on existing occupiers is called for in order to meet these exceptional cases. A large proportion of the land of England is let for one reason or another at rents below what may be termed the economic level. To secure the present occupiers in their tenure of these farms at the current rents would be to make them a present of that part of the real value of the land for which the owner is not demanding a return in the shape of rent. We regret to say that experience does not lead us to expect that the average occupier would respond to such a gift by any intensification of his farming or by increased production. The response would come from the succeeding occupier, to whom would eventually be sold this interest, which the original occupier had not in any way earned. Low rents have too often resulted in slack farming, and to secure the farmer in those rents would in such cases only leave him content with his unprogressive methods.

50. What will be required above all other things for the benefit of agriculture when peace is restored is an uninterrupted flow of capital to the land. It will be only too difficult for the landowners to find that capital owing to the inevitable pressure of taxation and we are convinced that the one certain effect of the establishment of a Land Court would be to dry up the spring of capital at its source. No prudent landowner would sell out stock, from which a return of interest is assured, and re-invest his capital in the industrial equipment of the land, if he ran the risk of losing the whole or part of the interest which he was expecting to receive from it by the decision of a Land Court. Moreover, we are convinced that it would not be to the interest of the State to confer upon tenant farmers a proprietary interest in the land they farm. If the policy which we recommend is adopted, the State will point out to the agricultural landowners the great service which they can render to the State in the reconstruction of agriculture, and the reasons of national security and welfare for which this service is required, and we are confident that the landowners will recognise their responsibility and respond to the appeal. At the present moment the responsibilities of ownership are by the law of the land vested only in them. In dealing with them the State will know exactly where it is and whom to hold responsible. It can appeal to their patriotism and, if the necessity should arise in individual cases, it can put further pressure upon them. But if by the establishment of a Land Court a system of dual ownership in any degree were created, the State would have to deal in respect of the responsibilities of ownership with all the tenant farmers as well as with all the agricultural landowners. In any case the State will have to make an appeal to the patriotism of the tenant farmers in the sphere of cultivation and production, analogous to that which it will have to make to the landowners in the sphere of ownership. As we have stated earlier in our Report, it is unfortunately the fact that many farms were already, before the War, sadly under-cultivated. Landowners find it difficult and inviolable to give notice to quit to an otherwise estimable neighbour because he is a bad farmer. But if the production of the land is to be raised to its maximum these bad farmers must, in the national interest, either mend their ways or give place to men who will farm the land as it should be farmed. The State must do what it can to encourage the good and eliminate the bad farmer, and, wherever the necessity is manifest, put pressure upon a landowner to adopt the same policy. Again, it has been the experience of the Board of Agriculture and of the County Councils in working the Small Holdings Acts that it is difficult sometimes to induce the farmer willingly to give up land for the creation of small holdings, even when the landowner is friendly to the project. That this is so may be regrettable, but it is also quite natural and intelligible. But if the farmer were to acquire a proprietary right in his farm in addition to his interest as a tenant, the difficulty of putting pressure upon the bad farmer and of working the Small Holdings Acts would be much increased.

51. For these reasons we are of opinion that the State would be creating a whole field of fresh difficulty and complication for itself if it inaugurated its new agricultural policy by conferring on the farmers a legal vested interest as part proprietors of their farms. Irish experience of the working of a Land Court fixing fair rents shows that it creates an atmosphere, a general feeling among the farming community, adverse to enterprise and good farming, because success might justify a higher level of rents. Men have deliberately farmed badly and let their farms down in the years of revision of rents in order to make a case for a reduction of rent by the Court. We propose in another part of our Report to consider whether or not any amendment is required in the Agricultural Holdings Act to meet the exceptional cases to which we have referred; but we do not advise the establishment of a Land Court. We propose to deal with the general case in a different way.

METHOD OF SECURING INCREASED PRODUCTION.

52. The Government has no fairy touch which will enable it to produce instantaneous results. It must work through, and by means of, the men who are now holding and cultivating the land. If it was so foolish as to try and do their work as well as its own, the only result would be to bring agricultural production to a standstill. There is no body of men in existence

except the farmers of the United Kingdom and those who have qualified, or who are qualifying, to become farmers, who are capable of farming the land. Technical knowledge based on experience is just as essential for successful farming as education and brains and capital. It is when all these qualifications exist in combination that the best farming is found. Therefore the State must give time to all concerned to adjust themselves to the new conditions dictated by considerations of national safety. It should formulate its policy and explain the reasons for it in simple definite terms; it should make clear the part it proposes to play itself, that the policy explained will be steadily and consistently followed, and that, while the policy is being worked out, the agricultural industry will not be subjected to any hampering legislation. The State must, in short, take every means in its power to give confidence and a sense of stability to landowners, farmers and agricultural labourers. It must then tell these classes exactly what is expected of them, and appeal to their highest instincts of patriotism to put personal predilections aside, and to unite to carry out a policy on the success of which the safety of their country may some day depend. The standard set before their eyes should be the highest—not to be content till the whole soil of the United Kingdom is producing the greatest possible returns of foodstuffs or of timber. It must be clearly understood that henceforth bad farming is a danger to the State, and that the waste of good land on game or games is inconsistent with patriotism. There will be plenty of room for game or golf in moderation, but too much game, or golf links carved out of fat land, make an inroad on the production of foodstuffs which can no longer be defended. Rabbits must be recognised to be what they are, a curse to both agriculture and forestry. There are localities where the rabbit defies extermination, but the effort to deal with the pest should never be intermitted. The theory in fact should be that rabbits are only to be tolerated in completely enclosed spaces, where the ground is of such a nature that it can more advantageously be devoted to the production of rabbits than of any other foodstuffs.

53. When all this has been explained to them, landowners and farmers should be informed that they will be given reasonable opportunity to adjust themselves to the new conditions. The agricultural labourers being secured their share of profits by the institution of a minimum wage, the landowners and the farmers may be left to adjust their shares between them and also to come to an agreement (which is essential) about the relaxation of covenants against the ploughing of grass land or of any others which tend to discourage good farming. We are satisfied that they will have no difficulty in doing so much more satisfactorily than the State could for them.

54. We entertain no doubt that landowners, farmers and agricultural labourers alike will realise the greatness of the trust reposed in them, that they will rejoice at the recognition of the fundamental importance of agriculture to the national life, and that they will do all, and more than all, that their country demands of them. But we recognise that, when once the State has embarked on such a policy as we recommend, for the sake of the nation's safety, it can run no avoidable risk of its failure. Neither the idiosyncrasies, nor the incapacity, nor the lack of patriotism of individuals can be allowed to interpose even a partial barrier to the success of a national policy. We recommend that the Board and Department of Agriculture should be instructed to carry out a general survey of the conditions of agriculture throughout the United Kingdom, and that the utmost care should be exercised in selecting those who are to undertake the work. Further, in Great Britain* we recommend that a panel of Assessors† should be set up for groups of counties in England and Wales;‡ one third of each panel to be appointed by the Board of Agriculture, one-third by the Chairmen of the County Councils in the area, and one-third by the President of the Surveyors' Institution. In Scotland, one-third of each panel should be appointed by the Board of Agriculture, one-third by the Chairmen of the County Councils in the area, and one-third by the Sheriffs of each county. In each case the nominators should meet and confer before making their selections, and the panels should be composed of men thoroughly skilled in estate management or in practical farming. The grouping of counties for this purpose might follow the existing provincial divisions for the agricultural education and live-stock schemes. There should also be constituted for England, Wales and Scotland separately a Review Committee§ consisting in each case of three persons, the greatest authorities on agriculture and estate management obtainable, who should be empowered to take legal advice if necessary. The members of the Review Committees for England and Wales should be selected by the Lord Chief Justice and for Scotland by the Lord Justice General.

55. The procedure would be as follows:—If, in the course of the survey, it appeared to the Board of Agriculture that land (other than a public or private garden or park) was, from any cause, not being fully utilised for the production of foodstuffs or timber, notice should be served upon the owner of the land by the Board of Agriculture to the effect that if, after an interval of three years from the date of the notice, the position was still unsatisfactory, the case would be referred to Assessors. If, at the end of these three years, evidence was not forthcoming of substantial improvement, the case should be referred to the panel of Assessors for the area, who should select three of their members not resident in that county to examine and report upon it. They should be required to inspect the farm or estate personally and to hear everything which the owner, or agent, or tenant, or any witness whose evidence

* We shall make distinct recommendations later to deal with the case of Ireland.

† The Assessors and Members of the Review Committee should, of course, be paid whenever their services are utilised.

‡ The Board of Agriculture and Fisheries in constituting the panels of assessors for Wales should act in consultation with the Agricultural Council for Wales.

they thought material to the case, had to say. But no counsel or solicitor should be permitted to appear professionally before them, nor should any costs be allowed. On receiving the report of the Assessors the Board of Agriculture should refer it to the Review Committee, whose function it would be either to recommend the adoption of the report or to order a supplementary or, if necessary, a new report. The Committee should not re-hear the case or act in any way as a Court of Appeal but merely consider and review the report. If the report, as passed by the Committee, was adverse to the general management of the estate and showed that good farming was being discouraged or impeded or had farming treated with too much leniency or that, for any other reason, the estate was not making the contribution which it could reasonably be expected to make to the production of foodstuffs, then certain consequences should follow. What those consequences should be we proceed to explain.

56. We recommend that the Board of Agriculture* should be empowered temporarily to supersede the landowner in the management of the estate for all purposes essential to agriculture. It should put the estate, or such portion of the estate as it might deem necessary, (except the mansion and the garden and park, if any, attached to the mansion) into the hands of a manager whose salary should be fixed by the Board of Agriculture and made a charge upon the estate. He should have the same powers in respect of the management of the agricultural land included in the estate as the owner had, and he should manage the estate as trustee for the owner. He should be a man of proved experience and capacity in the management of an agricultural estate, and he should render a yearly report and statement of accounts to the owner and to the Board of Agriculture. The balance of income, if any, derived from the estate after the payment of the necessary outgoings should be remitted half-yearly to the owner by the Board of Agriculture. When once the management of an estate had been so taken over by the Board of Agriculture, it should retain that management for five years, unless within that period there had been a successor in title to the original owner, in which case the estate should be handed back to his management at the end of the current farming year, if he so desires it and is prepared to accept such liabilities as may have been incurred in connection with it. If there had been no change of ownership within that period, the Board of Agriculture should be empowered to hand back the estate to the original owner at its termination if it was satisfied that the future management of the estate would be satisfactory. If it was not so satisfied, then it would continue to manage the estate for another quinquennial period, and so on from five years to five years, until there had been a change of ownership. The owner should, throughout, be undisturbed in the exercise of sporting rights over the estate, subject to the power of the manager of the estate to prevent those sporting rights being exercised in a manner detrimental to agriculture or forestry. If the owner of such an estate is unable or unwilling to develop it for the purposes of agricultural production, the Board of Agriculture should have the power to borrow from the Land Commissioners and to develop it for that purpose by the expenditure of capital, the charges for which (interest and sinking fund) should have priority over all existing charges on the land charged according to the principle embodied in the Improvement of Land Act, 1864. During the period of supersession the power of the owner to make any fresh charges on the estate, or part of the estate, should be suspended, and the existing charges on it, whether by way of mortgage or of settlement, should be paid out of the proceeds of the land by the Board of Agriculture.

57. For the guidance of all concerned, it should be laid down that it shall be the duty of every landowner so to manage his estate, and that it shall be an implied condition in every lease or tenancy agreement, that the tenant of agricultural land shall cultivate the same according to the approved practice of the best agriculture, with a view to the economic production in the interests of the community of the greatest amount of food-stuffs (for man or beast), of which the land, having regard to its quality and position, is reasonably capable.

58. Where land is being badly farmed by a tenant who holds a lease, and who persists in farming badly after being duly warned of the ultimate consequences, the landowner may bring the case before the Board of Agriculture, at the same time giving formal notice of his action to the tenant. The Board should thereupon ask the local panel to appoint assessors resident in another county than that in which the farm is situated to report upon the farm, and in due course should refer their report to the Review Committee. If, as the result of the unfavourable nature of the report in respect of the farming of the land, the Review Committee so recommended, then the Board of Agriculture should be empowered to call upon the landowner to give twelve months' notice to the tenant to quit, and that notice should have effect as if the tenant had held no lease but was a tenant holding on a yearly agreement.

59. In the later part of our Report we shall deal with agricultural organisation in all its aspects, but it is advisable to state here that, in our opinion, the Agricultural Department in each country should, in carrying out the duties described in paragraphs 54 to 58 of this part, act in constant consultation with a National Agricultural Council or Board, which we hope may be formed so as to represent the progressive agricultural thought of the country and fulfilling analogous functions to those attributed to the German Agricultural Council by Mr. Middleton in "The Recent Development of German Agriculture."

60. We recommend further that the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries shall appoint a Departmental Committee to report how the grazing of common lands in England and Wales may be improved by regulation or enclosure with a view to the increase of production, and what legislation will be required to effect that improvement.

* The Board of Agriculture and Fisheries for England and Wales; and for Scotland the Board of Agriculture for Scotland.

61. The provision of good cottages for agricultural labourers with ample gardens attached to them was an urgent question before the War. We desire to impress upon His Majesty's Government, with the greatest emphasis at our command, that there can be no hope of a satisfactory development of agriculture as long as the demand for cottages remains unsatisfied. The provision of these cottages should be taken in hand without a moment's avoidable delay after the War. In another part of our Report we shall deal with the improvement of the amenities of rural life, the reconstruction of squalid villages, and the provision of an agricultural "ladder" for the labourers by means of smallholdings. We mention these subjects now lest it should be supposed that we consider that the interest of the labourer in a national agricultural policy is limited to the questions of wages and housing.

62. Our attention has been directed to the point that some amendment in the Settled Land Acts may be desirable to allow a share of the proceeds of the sale of a portion of a settled estate to be expended on improvements other than those specified in the existing Acts. For instance, we are informed that it is not at present in the power of the Trustees or of the Court to permit any part of such proceeds to be utilised for the purpose of dividing one large farm into two or three smaller farms and equipping them with the necessary farm buildings or cottages, or to enable a tenant for life himself to farm a portion of his own estate. If this is so, an amendment of the Acts, to make such an utilisation of part of the capital received from a sale of a portion of the estate permissible, seems to us to be highly desirable. We may observe that a Bill,* carefully prepared by the Law Society, containing every alteration which in their experience and opinion was required to facilitate the management of settled landed property, was introduced into the House of Lords by Lord Haldane, when Lord Chancellor, in 1914, and in our opinion that measure should be proceeded with at the earliest possible opportunity.

63. To bring about the changes in farming which we contemplate it will be necessary for the State, in addition to providing farmers with security against loss, to place at their disposal the best available scientific and practical advice. Indeed, it will be impossible to carry out the scheme (except with serious loss and wastage) unless it is accompanied by an important development of the facilities at present available in the United Kingdom for agricultural education, technical advice, and research. It will be necessary to insist on the importance of drainage, and to demonstrate throughout the country the best means of converting grass land to arable, the best methods of manuring, and the best varieties of seed; and to carry out on a much more complete system than has hitherto been attempted demonstrations devised to show that increased production can be secured without loss of profit. These subjects are, however, of such importance that we are deferring their consideration until the later part of our Report.

SUGAR BEET.

64. Before concluding this part of our Report, we wish to make certain recommendations in respect of the introduction of the sugar beet industry into the United Kingdom. For several years the possibility of developing the agricultural resources of this country by introducing the sugar beet industry into England and Wales has been under consideration by agriculturists and the Government Departments concerned. We believe that the advantages to be derived from its successful establishment would be very important. The nation, by producing a proportion of its own requirements of sugar, would reduce its dependence on imported supplies from Germany and Austria, from which countries, in the three years before the War, 1911-13, we received 53 per cent. of our total imports of sugar. The rural community would be benefited and augmented by the provision of employment in sugar factories in the winter months and of additional work on the land in the summer. Agriculture would gain by the introduction of a new crop, which yields a satisfactory cash return to the farmer and leaves a residue which is a valuable cattle food. Moreover, wherever beet was grown, the deep tillage and improved cultivation necessary for its success would prove of immense benefit to the other crops in the rotation as well as an object lesson to the country in good farming. Of all these statements there is abundant evidence from Continental sources (*e.g.*, "The Recent Development of German Agriculture" [Cd. 8306], p. 38).

65. Before the beet industry can become the object of private enterprise, it would be necessary to ascertain by experiment an answer to two questions, namely: Can sugar beet be grown successfully in this country? and, secondly, Can sugar be manufactured from home-grown beet at a profit after paying an adequate price to the grower? The first of these questions has for some years passed beyond the experimental stage. Many trials in cultivation have been made, and it is generally agreed that sugar beet can be grown successfully in many districts of England and Wales. The Board of Agriculture and Fisheries, for example, in reporting on experiments arranged in 1911 at seven centres in England, stated: "There is no question that beet with a high sugar content can be grown in this country and give yields equalling, if not exceeding, those obtained on the Continent."

66. Since that date various efforts have been made with a view to testing the possibility of manufacturing sugar in this country at a profit, and we wish specially to mention the beet sugar factory which is in actual existence at Cantley in Norfolk. British agriculturists owe a debt of gratitude to the men who have borne the burden of the pioneer work done at Cantley, and a tribute of admiration for the pluck with which they met the unforeseen difficulties caused by the War, until the refusal of the Dutch Government to allow the export of seed

* Real Property and Conveyancing Bill: Ordered to be printed August 6, 1914.
† Cd. 5102, 1912, page 14.

brought their operations to a temporary conclusion. Nevertheless, we do not think that an experiment on an adequate scale has yet been made. Up to the present the Government has been hampered in providing financial assistance towards the erection of a sugar beet factory (or in guaranteeing a company against loss) by two considerations. In the first place, the Brussels Sugar Convention limited the extent to which Government assistance could be given to the industry by pledging adhering States not to give bounties on the export of sugar, which the Board of Trade considered included the payment of grants to assist the manufacture of home-grown sugar, of which some might be exported. His Majesty's Government withdrew from the Brussels Sugar Convention on 1st September, 1913. Although, at that time, they expressed continued adherence to the fundamental principles of the Convention, they reserved to themselves power, by giving six months' notice, to adopt any measures they thought fit to promote the establishment of the sugar beet industry. The second difficulty has been the limitation imposed on the Development Commissioners by the Development and Road Improvement Funds Act, 1909, to recommend advances only to associations not trading for profit. Probably one of the best ways in which the required experiment could be carried out under commercial conditions would be for the Government to undertake to share (or to guarantee) any loss, up to a specified amount, which might be sustained by a company aiming at making a profit for its shareholders. Such a scheme cannot at present, however, be aided from the Development Fund. To surmount this obstacle we recommend that either the Development and Road Improvement Funds Act should be amended in this respect, or that the Government should provide the necessary assistance from sources not subject to the same restrictions as the Development Fund.

67. A Society, entitled the British Sugar Beet Growers' Society, Limited, has recently applied to the Treasury for a grant from the Development Fund to enable it to purchase an estate of about 5,000 acres with a view to the erection of a factory and the cultivation on its own land of a sufficient acreage of beet to produce the minimum amount of roots required to work the factory economically. Captain Berille Stunier, M.P., the Chairman of the Society, in his evidence before us, stated that the capital required to purchase the estate, erect and equip the factory, &c., would be £500,000, of which he hoped that the Government would agree to contribute one-half, to be repaid, if required, at the end of ten years, during which period the State would be asked to guarantee interest on the remaining capital raised from private individuals. The State would also be asked to undertake to continue during the initial period of ten years the present surtax, that is, the difference between the Customs duty on imported sugar and the Excise duty on home-grown sugar, which at the present time amounts to 2s. 4d. per cwt. We believe this scheme to have been thought out with great care and to be a sound one, but as it is now under the consideration of the Government we do not express any opinion upon its details. We desire, however, to place on record our opinion that before the industry can be established it is necessary to ascertain (a) the price which a factory could afford to give for roots; (b) whether that price will be sufficient to induce the farmer to substitute beet for a portion of his present root crop, and (c) how far beet growing can be introduced into the systems of farming at present carried on in this country. These questions can only be settled by an experiment on a commercial scale, but we are of opinion that the best method of conducting such an experiment will be by the institution of a large farm under the same control as the factory.

68. In view of the great importance which we attach to the establishment of the beet industry, we urge the Government to arrange without further delay for a complete test of the commercial possibilities of manufacturing sugar from home-grown beet. We hope that this test will prove that a considerable proportion of the sugar we consume can be grown in the United Kingdom, and that the introduction of the beet crop into the rotation will increase the yield of the other crops. In short, we believe that it will prove that the introduction of the sugar-beet industry will be a contribution of much importance to the increased production of foodstuffs in the United Kingdom.

We are,

Sir,

Your obedient Servants,

(Signed)

SELBORNE (*Chairman*).

CHARLES BATHURST.

CHARLES DOUGLAS.

AILWYN FELLOWES.

W. FITZHERBERT-BROCKHOLES.

A. D. HALL.

WILLIAM A. HAVILAND.

C. BRYNER JONES.

*DENIS KELLY.

HORACE PLUNKETT.

ROWLAND E. PROTHERO.

G. G. REA.

GEO. H. ROBERTS.

EDWARD G. STROUT.

H. L. FRENCH,
A. GODDARD,

Joint Secretaries.

30th January, 1917.

REPORT

BY

SIR MATTHEW WALLACE.

To the RT. HON. D. LLOYD GEORGE, M.P., Prime Minister.

SIR,

While there is much of the foregoing Report with which I am in cordial agreement, I nevertheless find in it implications which are contingent upon policy from which I dissent, and I find myself unable to add my signature to those of my colleagues and prefer to state my views in a separate memorandum. It must be borne in mind that the reference deals exclusively with post-war conditions, and I demur to the present state of emergency and the measures adopted to cope with it being exploited so as to postulate a continuance of these measures as a settled policy after the War.

2. I agree that a complete and thorough survey of all existing agricultural conditions is required since no step can be judiciously taken without it, and in regard to labourers' cottages I agree with the Report.

3. I also agree with my colleagues in reference to agricultural wages and wages boards, but I object to this necessary reform being made contingent upon the policy of guaranteed prices for corn. The question is one chiefly affecting the south of England, since wages in the north of England and in Scotland have been fairly high, and a Wages Board has no terrors for employers there. In the south of England, where wages are lowest, rents are also lowest, and it is not apparent that the conditions prevailing are incompatible with the payment of the same wages as those obtaining in the north. A return for such increase is usually to be found in greater efficiency. The question was a clamant one before the War and was about to receive attention. The late Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith, seven months before the outbreak of war, indicated the method by which he proposed to effect a remedy, as follows:—

"We have reached the conclusion that this is a case in which the State must step in and secure a minimum wage. What do I mean when I use the expression 'a minimum wage'? I mean a wage such as to ensure a labourer of average industry and prudence reasonable conditions of living, among which I include, and note this, the ability to pay a commercial or economic rent for the house in which he lives. . . . We believe—I say it as the result of careful examination—that the raising of the wage in the worst-paid areas to the level upon which it is already paid, without any undue tax upon the profitability of the agriculture, in the areas which are best paid, will not in the long run impose any burden upon the farmer. Not only in this, but in other industries; not only in this country at this time, but in other countries at other times, all experience shows that ill-paid labour is the least efficient and that an increase in efficiency, due to better food and to the raising of the general conditions of daily life, will sooner or later—and, as we think, sooner rather than later—make itself apparent in increased productivity and yield. But none the less we recognise that the change may carry with it temporary hardships, and we propose, as you know, that, if the farmer can show on application to this Federal Commission, that that is the case, they may consider its bearing on the rent which he ought to pay to the landlord, taking, of course, into account, whether he was fully or under paid before."

This, to my mind, is a sound policy applicable to the whole country after the War.

4. The first portion of the Report with which I find myself in conflict is the narrative of the Depression and its effects. It is incomplete in one most important particular, viz., the omission of all reference to the inflation of rents which took place in the 'sixties and 'seventies and which kept pace with the rise in prices of produce. This was the real cause of the farmers' distress when prices fell. When rents were reduced the situation was eased, but meanwhile much farmers' capital had disappeared. Mention is made of the landlords' losses of £834,000,000, arrived at by a remarkable process of computation, viz.:—

Date.	Annual Value.	Years' Purchase.	Capital Value.	Loss.
	£		£	
1875	55,818,438	30	1,664,452,840	} 834,893,718
1894	40,317,329	18	833,719,122	

To appreciate the true value of these figures a comparative statement of the twenty years prior to 1875, showing the annual value of 1855 \times 18 years' purchase and 1874 \times 30 years' purchase would be required. The balance of gain would, in my opinion, far more than outweigh the enormous figure represented as landlords' loss. It is indeed a matter of surprise that rents underwent so small a reduction considering the severity of the depression and having regard to the previous inflation.

5. Similarly under this head (para. 7) the recital of effects is incomplete. The deplorable condition of Essex is no doubt quite correctly described, but it should also be added that there was an almost immediate immigration into that derelict county—to a considerable extent from Scotland. It cannot be truly said that the incomers were lacking in brains, and they either brought capital with them or they speedily amassed it, for they or their sons are now extremely prosperous, and first-rate food producers. That a portion of Essex within a few miles of London, the best market in the world, should still remain in a derelict condition, “clothed with a dense growth of bramble, brier, thorn and gorse” is truly deplorable. Surely legislation can provide a remedy for this. Before the War thousands of competent farmers emigrated annually, and after the War many thousands will follow, in search of land presenting physical difficulties of cultivation compared to which the clearance of bramble, brier, thorn and gorse are trifles. Give such men the chance of occupying this derelict territory on prairie terms and there will soon be no waste land in Essex.

6. It is on the head of minimum guaranteed prices mainly that I disagree with the Report, the policy indicated being minimum guaranteed prices on wheat and oats. It is advocated primarily on the ground that it would provide security and stability to the farmer. This assurance I cannot accept, and it is necessary to go closely into the reason of my scepticism. In the first place, minimum guarantees are themselves essentially unstable. Even on this Committee, after considering for two months and hearing evidence, the prices deliberately adopted remained constant for only one week, and more recent experience affords abundant illustration of the uncertainties attaching to the fixation of minimum and maximum prices. Since one Parliament cannot bind its successor, there can be no security for a continuing policy while the perils of uncertainty are manifest. Therefore, in my opinion, the farmer would do well not to rely on any such artificial assistance. Moreover, such artificial prosperity is liable to leak. The Report discloses at least two ways by which the farmer can immediately be relieved of his subsidy, viz., increased wages and increased taxation (para. 44). I would venture to suggest a third, viz., increased rent—not less probable than either of the other two. Most if not all of the witnesses admitted that any State subsidy must reflect on rents, and indeed such is the tacit admission of the Report. It is plain, therefore, that the farmer would be left with only a fraction of his bounty, and it must be obvious that, if it takes the whole of the difference between the “Gazette” price and the guarantee to induce a farmer to break up grass and grow corn, a fraction thereof will be unlikely to encourage him to persevere. There is another point upon which the farmer would do well to reflect, viz., that minimum guaranteed prices are apt to become maxima, indeed such a result would appear to be by no means improbable. If a farmer is guaranteed his prices and consequently his profit, the burden meanwhile being borne by the taxpayer, will not the taxpayer in his turn demand that when the “Gazette” price exceeds the guarantee, the surplus should flow to the Treasury?

7. What is described in the Report as slack farming is greatly to be deplored, and an amendment must be sought for, and insisted upon, but I do not believe that the payment of a bounty would stimulate a slack farmer, who would continue to grow the same quantity of wheat as before and pocket the bounty. It need to be said that the best way to stimulate a farmer was to raise his rent, and I think a hint of this is contained in the last sentence of para. 49. At all events it is a doctrine which has been revived and quite recently advocated publicly by one who is both an eminent agriculturist and a landlord. These two plans for stimulating the farmer are incongruous, but their juxtaposition is not without the suggestion that the one provides an easy method of achieving the other. The farmer would do well to study the machinery proposed for administration in paras. 37 and 38, and will doubtless realise how complicated and unworkable it is.

8. The first and most patent objection to minimum guaranteed prices on corn is that the minimum guarantee must be high enough to fit the minimum yield per acre. The Committee were told by Mr. T. H. Middleton, Assistant Secretary to the Board of Agriculture, that of the three million acres which would require to be broken up to reach the 1874 standard of tillage in England and Wales, two million acres would be of equal staple and capable of producing equal crops to the land now bearing wheat, but that the remaining one million acres would grow only 27 bushels per acre with the best management and most scientific treatment as regards seed selection and fertilisers. The guarantee must therefore be high enough to secure the occupier of such land a profit if he is to be induced to grow wheat, and if such guarantee is forthcoming, and is universally applied to all wheat growers, it is obvious that public money would be granted unnecessarily when the economic point of yield is reached. Such a scheme of bounties is calculated to aggrandise those who do not need assistance and to stint those who do. Thus, supposing the difference between the “Gazette” and guarantee prices was 10s. per quarter for wheat, the man whose land will only produce three quarters per acre would only get 30s. per acre, and it would not be enough. On the other hand, the man whose land produces six quarters, and who certainly needs no help, would get 60s. per acre. To illustrate this point I would refer to the evidence of two witnesses. One, who was a large grower of wheat on good land, told the Committee that his yield was seven quarters per acre, and his figures showed very high profits under pre-war conditions. He advocated a guaranteed minimum but when pressed he frankly avowed that to endow him in this way would be a gross abuse of public funds.

9. The other, who was most reluctant to admit any profit in wheat growing, advocated a minimum guarantee of 75s. to 80s. per quarter, and concluded by declaring that, no matter what steps were taken, not another quarter of wheat could be got from Norfolk, which already was in full bearing of wheat. Now Norfolk produces 500,000 quarters annually and the difference between the 1913 price and the guarantee demanded by this witness would be at least 40s. per quarter, making a sum of £1,100,000 to be granted annually from public funds to Norfolk, which

would hardly be a good bargain for the State, since, according to this witness, no more wheat would be forthcoming. These are, no doubt, extreme cases, but they serve to illustrate the operation of guaranteed prices and show how public money can be made to flow in channels which are wasteful and unproductive.

10. Further, in aggravation of this abuse the Report suggests that the good land should be retained in grass and the land of poor staple put to tillage. Paragraph 21 enumerates four classes of pasture, three of which it is claimed should not be ploughed, the fourth only being put to tillage. The second and third classes, i.e., grass on plastic clay and grass in an impossible climate, both of which present obstacles to tillage, difficult to overcome, had probably better remain in grass. But I join issue sharply with the Report upon the treatment of the first class and the last class of pasture lands enumerated. The first class is good land. It is not suggested that it offers any physical obstacles to tillage. The excellent pasture it bears is indicative of its excellent inherent fertility. It is here precisely where the most profitable of tillage crops could be produced, wheat, potatoes, roots and rotation grasses. The plea that its retention in grass can be "defended on economic grounds" cannot be accepted. It may yield the owner as good a rent as it would fetch as tillage land, it may yield the occupier a comfortable profit without much trouble, in short it is a thoroughly sound economic proposition; but that is not the question. It is not a question of whether it is economically sound in grass, but whether it would be economically sound in tillage. If it can be shown that it offers insurmountable difficulties to tillage or that it would grow poor crops in tillage rotation there is nothing to be said, but it would be wrong to exclude it from tillage on such slender ground as that it pays in grass, and it would be the surest way to defeat the purpose set out in the remit to this Committee. The phrase "defended on economic grounds" is a loose and ambiguous one under cover of which hundreds of thousands of acres of what is or can be made the best arable land in Britain would be excluded from tillage, land capable of growing crops which need no bounties. If attention be directed to the other category of grass it will be found to contain the greater part of the million acres capable of producing at the best 27 bushels of wheat, and not only will its cereal yield be low, but it will be a struggle to make ends meet throughout the whole rotation, since it was clearly proved from Mr. Middleton's figures that this class of land was much more expensive to work. This is, of course, the class of land that would require bounties if tillage thereof were made compulsory. Political economists can form their own opinion of a proposition which excludes land from tillage which is self-supporting and highly productive in tillage, and includes land which is unprofitable in tillage and requires grants from public funds to supply the deficiency. As a tillage farmer of long standing and experience, occupying both classes of land, I must record my opinion that such a policy is subversive of every principle of tillage good husbandry, and that its adoption demands that those who practice it shall receive the aid of bounties. There is no reason why land of poor staple which has 'tumbled down' to grass should remain in that condition, and the fact that it has so remained is not creditable to those responsible for it. Labour has certainly not been costly in districts where these conditions chiefly obtain. There have been many periods during the thirty years in question when grass seeds were good and cheap. Such land can be properly laid out to grass, and as grass can be nourished with fertilizers. On the other hand, good land should be made to produce its last ounce of food under the plough. Mr. Middleton's evidence was that the million acres would bear one-fifth annually in wheat, that is 200,000 acres, which at 27 bushels per acre gives 575,000 quarters per annum. It seems incredible that for such a small quantity of wheat or a proportionately small quantity of oats the whole economy of agriculture should be disturbed, a bounty-fed system which might cost the Treasury millions of pounds annually set up, and cumbersome, costly, and inquisitorial machinery of administration invoked.

11. The Report is based on the assumption that cereal growing does not pay, and indeed that it is only engaged in with fair constancy year by year because of tenacity to custom and of faith in what the future may hold. It can hardly be suggested that custom and hope would enable a man to carry on this business at a loss for 35 years. Another reason vouchsafed is the convenience of having straw. Now, straw is not a convenience, it is an absolute necessity to the arable farmer; he cannot do without it. It is a most important integral part of his business without which he can neither feed his stock nor fertilize his land. Therefore it has value. Evidence was given before the Committee as to the value of straw per acre, and the lowest figure named was £2 per acre and the highest £4 10s. The mean of these two figures—£3 5s.—is exactly fifty per cent. of what was shown to be the average cost of growing wheat—£6 10s.—per acre. But the evidence of farmers before the Committee showed that profits on wheat were by no means confined to straw. All were prosperous growers of wheat and some submitted their accounts showing substantial profits on wheat even in the derelict county of Essex. It is idle to single out any one crop of a rotation, and say that it does not pay; that indeed could easily be done with every crop in the rotation, and figures could be produced purporting to justify such a conclusion. The broad question is—Does tillage pay? The answer is that it does; and the statement that it does not is negatived by the success with which farmers have been able to carry on.

12. In the matter of finance the Report is not very bold. It is not enough to express the opinion that the world price will not fall below the guarantees named—42s. per quarter for wheat, and 23s. per quarter for oats—and to indicate a ready reckoner in the event of this happening. It will be better, I think, to face the matter. I do not suggest that any calculation should be founded on a price—32s. 10d. per quarter—which happened only once in sixty years, nor on the average of the decade of low prices. It would not, however, be unreasonable to use the average figures of the ten years prior to the War—32s. per quarter for wheat, and 19s. 6d. for oats—in which case the margin the Exchequer would annually have to pay would be 10s.

per quarter on wheat and 3s. 6d. per quarter on oats, and the amount payable would be approximately £3,500,000 for each kind of grain, a total of £7,000,000. That would be the sum if there was no expansion at all. If the production was doubled, the annual payment to farmers would amount to £14,000,000. These figures do not represent all the cost to the country, for the ponderous machinery of administration is bound to be very expensive. I do not wish to go further and suggest a higher production and still higher payment, as I do not believe the production can go further, although I am persuaded that it would by no means complete the bill, for once the principle of guaranteed prices is adopted, it will be found to be an exceedingly slippery slope, and those who rely on the production of food other than wheat and oats will never rest content so long as their products do not enjoy similar treatment.

13. The above calculations are based upon the minimum guaranteed prices which the Report recommends should be perpetual. But for the first two years after the conclusion of peace it is recommended that the guaranteed prices of wheat and oats should be at least comparable to the prices ruling during the War itself. When that was written and signed the price of wheat and oats ranged at about 75s. and 50s. per quarter respectively. Can it be possible that these prices or prices approaching them are seriously recommended as minimum for two years after the conclusion of peace? What is there to justify such a proposal? It is not suggested that farmers require these high prices to make profits even now; still less so after the War, when the labour difficulty will be eased, at all events as respects supply, and when fertilizers will be cheapened by the release of acids no longer required in munition making.

14. The effect of guaranteed prices on rents has already been alluded to, and the question is asked in the Report:—Should a Land Court be established to adjust rents? As a business man I have never been able to see why landlords should not take economic rents; but I remark here that if such economic rents are affected by grants from public funds, then the landlord must submit to public control. In any case some control of both landlord and tenant is necessary to secure maximum production. It is stated in paragraph 50 that "Landowners find it difficult and invidious to give notice to quit to an otherwise estimable neighbour, because he is a bad farmer." I agree with the Report that some machinery is necessary to enable that difficulty to be overcome. The Report suggests the necessary tribunal in paragraph 58—The Board of Agriculture—through whose interposition the landlord is to be enabled to get rid of a bad farming tenant. Now, what is this but a sort of Land Court? Assuredly, as national interests and the landlord's interests alike demand an appeal to the tribunal in the case specified, so also do national interests and common elementary justice demand that the tenant shall have a similar right of appeal as well as protection against disturbance in his tenure for any assigned reason, including that of rent. A little consideration will, I feel sure, show that the Board of Agriculture officials are not the proper persons to deal with such questions. They have their own proper duties, and had much better not be concerned with landlord and tenant disputes. A statutory body composed of specially qualified men is much to be preferred.

15. In formulating an agricultural policy the first thing to be considered is, in my opinion, security and stability to the farmer, security, that is, in his tenure and in the fruits of his enterprise. No man can be expected to put forth his utmost efforts in creating national wealth, and prosperity for himself, which another may take. In my opinion the time has arrived when, in the interests of the State, this question must be resolutely faced. Only in such an event can compulsion of the farmer be justified.

16. The remit enjoins consideration of this subject with regard to national security. I do not believe that it is possible to provide security in the sense of producing home grown food sufficient for the consumption of the entire population. There are too many mouths and too few acres. But, undoubtedly, the food production of Britain can be enormously increased by more tillage and better farming. In these two respects there is no serious difference between the opinions of the majority of the Committee and my own.

17. Efficiency is, however, the keynote of the situation, and the means of ensuring this the State can provide. The second part of the Report will, I am sure, indicate how this can be accomplished. Instruction and information have not yet reached the man who tills the soil; his desire for knowledge has not even been quickened. Give the farmer information, acquaint him with the reason of things, and you will give him the most wholesome kind of State aid. To some extent this has been accomplished, and where this is the case I am certain that never in the history of British Agriculture has there been a period of better farming and greater production. Indeed it is true almost universally in certain districts and of certain selected crops. One could, for instance, point to the enormous development of potato culture in East Anglia, or to the market gardening of Evesham, and ask with pride, where in the wide world such production could be matched; and this has been accomplished, not by sitting down, wringing the hands and whimpering for bounties, but by the application of high intelligence, technical skill and industry.

18. Technical instruction and agricultural education generally should in my opinion be under the jurisdiction of Departments of Agriculture as it is in Ireland, and the powers, functions, and efficiency of these Departments should be enlarged in manifold degree. A million pounds, or a much larger sum if necessary, annually spent in this way would repay the expenditure tenfold. It is no use trying to teach agriculture in colleges or from books alone. To raise the standard of efficiency and of production, instruction must be brought right down to the farmer, and his interest must be enlisted. Demonstrate to him on his own land, even keep his books for him for a time if necessary; but leave him with no excuse for ignorance. When all that has been done it will be time enough to use compulsion in respect of methods. For

that no complicated machinery is necessary. Moreover, land in grass which ought to be in tillage, and which can be proved to be profitable in tillage, should reasonably be the subject of taxation; a precedent for this is the Irish policy now in operation.

19. I confess I have not been able to arrive at a clear view upon the question of the payment of a bonus for breaking up grass. The evidence was conflicting as to the necessity, and in the main I am inclined to the opinion that the former breaking up grass has, in the cumulative fertility accruing from long retention in grass, an asset sufficient to carry him well through initial outlays. But under this head I think the landlord is clearly entitled to some consideration. In many cases he will have to provide equipment where there is an extension of tillage. Such advances need not be uniform or universally applied, but I am of opinion that there is a principle of justice involved which should not be disregarded. The experience of the present year, when it is hoped large areas will be brought under the plough by the system of bonuses adopted, will be of the utmost value in determining what action should be taken in the future.

20. I have no personal experience of the cultivation of sugar beet, but after a careful consideration of the evidence I support the recommendation of the Report. Unquestionably, if a root crop of such importance could be established as an economic proposition it would go far to solve the problem of increased tillage. Root crops, or, as they are called in some districts, fallow crops or green crops, are, in my opinion, the foundation of tillage operations and are in the true sense the pivotal crops. Secure these, and cereal crops automatically follow. This is, of course, diametrically opposed to the opinion expressed in the Report that cereals are to be the pivotal crops. I regard this difference as one of extreme importance, and it governs to a great extent the different opinions expressed. In this opinion I am supported by Dr. Russell, of Rothamsted, who says in his evidence "The key to the situation seemed therefore to lie in the root or fallow break. The wheat crop may be regarded as the superstructure seen by the public but the root crop was the foundation on which it rested."

21. The fact that on the one hand this country with its teeming population affords an unsurpassed market for agricultural produce, while on the other, the land of these islands provides soil of almost unrivalled productivity, should surely lead to the reflection that some intervening obstacle must be responsible for any failure on the part of agriculture as a profitable industry.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Signed) MATTHEW G. WALLACE.

20th February, 1917.

APPENDIX I.

LIST OF WITNESSES WHO HAVE GIVEN ORAL EVIDENCE BEFORE THE SUB-COMMITTEE.
(10th OCTOBER—7th DECEMBER, 1916.)

Name.	Representing, Nominated by, or other Qualification.
1. The Rt. Hon. the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres	President of the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries.
2. The Rt. Hon. F. D. Adams, M.P.	Parliamentary Secretary to the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries.
3. Professor John Wrightson	Late Principal of the College of Agriculture, Downing, Wills. Special Crop Reporter to "The Times."
4. Mr. C. W. Fielding	Farmer, County of Elgin.
5. Mr. George A. Ferguson	Assistant Secretary, Board of Trade Employment Department.
6. Mr. W. H. Beveridge, C.B.	County Land Agent for Carmarthenshire, Development Commissioner, &c.
7. Mr. H. Jones-Davies	Assistant Secretary, Board of Agriculture and Fisheries.
8. Mr. T. H. Middleton, C.B.	Chairman of the Board of Agriculture for Scotland.
9. Sir Robert P. Wright	Organiser of Agricultural Education to the Lindsey County Council.
10. Mr. R. N. Dowling	Member of the Sub-Committee.
11. The Hon. E. G. Strutt	West of Scotland Agricultural College, Glasgow.
12. Principal W. G. R. Paterson	Farmer in Shropshire and Dorsetshire.
13. Mr. Richard Edwards	Agricultural Commissioner for Wales.
14. Mr. C. Bryner-Jones, M.Sc.	Chairman of the British Sugar Beet Growers' Society, Limited.
15. Captain Neville Stanner, M.P.	Director of Rothamsted Experimental Station, Harpenden.
16. Mr. E. J. Russell, D.Sc.	Hon. Secretary, Scottish Farm Servants' Union.
17. Mr. Joseph Forbes Duncan	Farmer in Haddingshire.
18. Mr. G. Hertram Shickle	Land Agent to the Duke of Bedford, Woburn, Bedfordshire.
19. Mr. C. P. Hall	
20. The Rt. Hon. Viscount Milner, G.C.B., G.C.M.G.	
21. Mr. J. M. Clark	Land Agent, Haltwhistle, Northumberland.
22. Mr. W. W. Berry	Farmer in Kent and Wiltshire.
23. Mr. Henry Overman	Farmer in Norfolk and Northamptonshire.
24. Mr. R. G. Patterson	Farmer in Staffordshire.

APPENDIX II

MEMORANDUM ON WHEAT PRODUCTION RECEIVED FROM PROFESSOR R. H. BIFFEN, F.R.S.
(SCHOOL OF AGRICULTURE, CAMBRIDGE.)

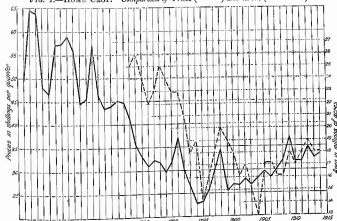
GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS.

1. The area devoted to the wheat crop in this country is so entirely dependent on the prices obtained for the grain, that it is highly improbable that any extension will take place unless the farmers see their way to obtain greater profits from the crop than they have in the past.

The interdependence is shown in Fig. 1, where the lower line represents the price in shillings per quarter,

and the upper line the area in millions of acres devoted to the crop. From 1870 until 1894, prices and acreage fell rapidly, but since 1897 the fairly steady rise in prices has been accompanied by a gradual rise in the acreage. The curves cross one another at several points, but this is due mainly to fluctuation in the acreage brought about by bad weather conditions during the late autumn when sowing should be in progress.

FIG. 1.—HOME CROP. Comparison of Prices (—) and Areas (---).

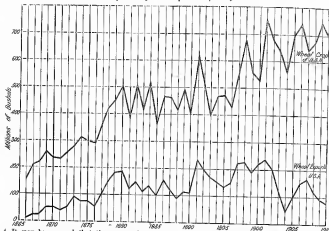


2. There are reasons for considering that the rise in price and consequently the increase in the area under wheat will continue. It is impossible to set these out fully, but the more important facts bearing on this point can be briefly summarized.

3. The fall between 1870 and 1894 was due mainly to the enormously rapid increase in the area under wheat in the United States. During this period the American population increased relatively slowly, with the result that there was a vast surplus available for

export. Further, the crops were produced under prairie conditions and the growers could afford to take a very low price for them. This, however, was a passing phase, for though the United States are still the largest wheat producers in the world, and though the area still tends to increase slightly, the amount exported tends to fall (Fig. 2). The results are so marked that we find American agricultural experts seriously considering the possibility of the United States having to become a wheat importing country in order to feed the rapidly growing population.

FIG. II.—Comparison of the Crop and Exports of the U.S.A.



4. It may be assumed that the course of events in America will prove typical of that of other countries where there has been a rapid rise in production under prairie conditions. The soils gradually become exhausted, and in place of continuous wheat cultivation a system of rotations has to be adopted in order to restore and retain their fertility.

In Canada, where production has increased rapidly from 1800 up to the present time, the first settled portions in the eastern parts of the country have been forced to fall back on the more intensive rotational cropping, leaving the newly settled western and north-western Provinces to carry on the system of extensive wheat growing under prairie conditions. It is impossible to say how much longer this cheap form of cultivation can be carried on. One of the most conservative of the Canadian estimates puts the undeveloped wheat area at about 14 million acres, whilst in another treble this figure is given as the area of new land which will ultimately be brought under this crop. It may be that Canada can double her present production, though it by no means follows that there will be double the present surplus for export.

5. There are several facts which lead one to question the statement so frequently made that Canada will shortly be the Empire's granary. In the first place the profits made from wheat growing are small and they do not satisfy many of the growers. A recent report states that in Manitoba they only amount to 2.65 dollars an acre, whilst in Saskatchewan they are as low as 1.72 dollars. These two Provinces produce nearly three-fourths of the total Canadian crop. If profits continue at this level, it seems unlikely that there will be any great extension in the area under wheat. Further, there is a good deal of uncertainty about the yield of crop. On the whole it is high for prairie conditions (averaging 19.5 bushels per acre for the period 1910-1914) but great losses are often experienced through the attacks of black rust, and in the northern districts much damage is often caused by frost before the grain is ready for harvest.

6. The position in the Argentine, another of our sources of cheap wheat, is more difficult to ascertain owing to the lack of reliable statistics. Since 1888 the area under wheat has increased from 2 to over 15 million acres, and in the same period our imports from this country have risen from 0.1 to some 20 per cent. of our total wheat imports. This has been accomplished in spite of an indifferent labour supply, bad systems of land tenure and very inadequate facilities for handling the crop. There are also indications that the wheat area may be increased still further, for locust cultivation is becoming general on many of the largest cattle ranches, and this crop is an excellent preparation for wheat. Improvements in the methods of cultivation will certainly lead to a large increase in the amount grown. But this does not necessarily imply that the Argentine will be in a position to flood this country with wheat at a lower price than we can raise it here. The factors which tell against this are the increasing needs of the Argentine population which appears to trouble its numbers in about forty years, the uncertainties of the yield owing to drought, rust and the attacks of locusts, and the high cost of freight between the two countries.

7. Russia, which is second only to the United States as a wheat producer, and occupies the first place if Asiatic Russia is included, has of late years provided us with about 10 per cent. of our total imports. An analysis of the figures for the past 30 years shows no marked tendency for the amount to either increase or diminish, though it varies considerably from year to year. The increasing wheat crop of the country appears to be absorbed locally, owing to the fact that wheaten bread is gradually replacing that made from rye. But Russian agriculture is still carried on, on somewhat primitive lines, and it seems probable that the attention now being paid to its more scientific development will lead to a considerable increase in the low average yields per acre characteristic of even the best wheat-growing districts. Lack of data prevent any consideration of the problem whether this increase will lead to greater exports or whether it will be required by the growing population.

8. Both India and Australia have for the past 30 years sent considerable, but very variable quantities of wheat to this country. In neither case can one see much possibility of the amounts being increased substantially, and the fact has always to be borne in mind that neither source is a particularly dependable one.

9. Whilst many of the facts are ill-defined, the general conclusions which can be drawn are fairly clear. The world's crop continues to increase slowly, and concurrently with this the number of wheat consumers increases—partly through the growth of the population, and partly through wheat replacing other cereal foods. Prices have tended to rise of late years, a fact which may indicate that the world's consumption is increasing faster than its rate of production. There are now no vast areas of land comparable with those of North and South America awaiting the pioneer wheat growers, and consequently there is no likelihood of any repetition of the over-production characteristic of the period 1875-1894. In all probability the price of wheat will continue to rise still further, and a level will be reached at which it will pay the home producer to derive more capital and energy to the problem of feeding the nation.

10. In 1944, wheat cultivation on land capable of producing an average crop of 32 bushels an acre was profitable with wheat at 30s. per quarter. In the immediate future, the farmer will probably look for a price of 40s. per quarter to cover the increased cost of production brought about by a higher wages bill. On less fertile soils and also on soils where there is a certain amount of risk in growing the crop owing to the difficulty of securing a fifth in the autumn months, a higher return—possibly amounting to 45s. will be expected.

I.—IMPROVEMENTS IN THE KINDS OF WHEAT GROWN.

11. Increased production may be expected from any improvement in the kinds of wheat grown. Until recently, so little had been effected in this direction, that some of the oldest wheats in cultivation were still the best grown. But of late years the systematic study of cross-breeding has opened up great possibilities of improvement. An examination of wheats collected from all parts of the wheat-growing world has shown that, whilst practically all of them are valuable for cultivation here, some few of them possess characteristics of considerable value which are lacking in our own wheats, but which the plant-breeder can—so put the matter somewhat crudely—transfer to the varieties we now grow. This can be illustrated by a couple of examples:—(a) showing the possibility of increasing the yield per acre; (b) of increasing the value of the crop itself.

12. (a) The yield per acre is determined by many factors. One of these is the loss caused by the attacks of various fungoid parasites of which the common yellow rust is the most important. Farmers rarely recognise that its presence in a crop is serious unless the epidemic happens to be particularly severe. Probably this is due to the fact that no experimental data exist to show what these losses amount to. It appears to be from 5 to 10 per cent. of the crop annually, but this season several cases have come under my notice in the few country where its attacks have reduced the yield per acre by one half, or even so seriously ruined the crop that it was not fit for hay. These losses are preventable, for rust-resisting wheats have been discovered and this characteristic has been transferred to varieties suitable for cultivation here. One of these has been tested on an extensive scale during the past four seasons, and found to give an average crop of 4 to 5 bushels more per acre than the ordinary rust-susceptible wheats generally grown. Records received from growers agree with these results, for they put the increase in their crops at 10 to 12 per cent. Still greater resistance has been secured, but as the varieties have not been tested on the wheatscale soils by farmers, no reference will be made to them. However, taking only the results already obtained in practice, they point to the fact that the improvement in this single feature leads, with wheat at 40s. per quarter, to a gain of about £1 per acre.

13. (b) A comparison of the prices of English and imported grain shows that the home crop is worth some 3s. or 4s. less per quarter than much of the wheat from America and Canada. These higher prices are paid at the ports of entry, and by the time the grain reaches the inland mills (the farmer's natural market) the difference in value amounts to 4s. or 5s.

14. The increased value of these imported wheats is due to their superiority for the manufacture of the type of bread now in universal demand in this country. English wheats lack a characteristic found in these imported varieties which is known to millers and bakers as "strength." Until recently it was believed that this feature was determined solely by climatic conditions. This view has been proved to be incorrect in certain cases, and we now know of several varieties capable of producing grain here which is practically as strong as that of the best imported wheats. Unfortunately these varieties are not suitable for general cultivation here. Their yield per acre is usually too low and the straw too slender and brittle to warrant any hopes of their ever being grown on an extensive scale. But their strength can be transferred to the heavy cropping kinds which we grow in this country. Many such types have been tested now, and the attempt is being made to find amongst these sorts suitable for the various soil and climatic conditions met with in England. The first strong variety raised and introduced has had a somewhat chequered career, for whilst it has been found to succeed well in some districts, its cropping capacity in others has been too low to be satisfactory. It is now thoroughly established in the districts which suit it, and its produce is sought after by the millers, who willingly pay 3s. or 4s. more per quarter for it than they pay for the ordinary wheats. A second variety has been introduced this season which in the preliminary trials has been found to possess excellent baking properties, whilst its cropping capacity on the farm attached to the Plant Breeding Institute at Cambridge, and at two other places, has proved superior to that of Square Head's Master.

15. If, as there is every reason to hope, the problem of breeding satisfactory strong wheats has been solved, then their cultivation should add about £1 to the value of the produce of every acre of wheat in the country.

16. These examples by no means exhaust the possibilities of improving English wheats.

17. Probably, of the various methods suggested for extending the cultivation of wheat in England, the direct improvement of the plant itself will prove the most important if only for the reason that increased profits can be obtained without any further cost to the grower.

II.—INTENSIVE CULTIVATION.

18. Our present yield of some 32 bushels per acre is obtained with the minimum expenditure of labour and of manure on the crop. Compared with that of most wheat-growing countries it is high, but it reaches this figure mainly because wheat is now grown only on those soils capable of producing a crop of about this magnitude, or more, without much expenditure. It represents, roughly, the lowest yield at which cultivation is now profitable. The poorer wheat-growing lands whose yields might considerably reduce the average yield have now dropped out of cultivation. But 32 bushels per acre by no means represents the amount which could be raised if better cultivation became general. The maximum crop an acre can produce under the most favourable circumstances is still unknown. It is certainly over 80 bushels, for this amount has been reached on several occasions.

19. In ordinary practice, the only factor affecting the yield per acre to which any attention is paid is that of the food materials available in the soil for the growing crop. Where any deficiencies are suspected these are made up for by the more or less casual application of artificial manures, mainly in the form of Chilli sulphate or sulphate of ammonia. The results are usually profitable. At a rough estimate the careful use of artificial might increase the average yield per acre from four up to five quarters. Putting the value of the extra quarter at 40s. and the cost of the manure at 15s., this shows a clear profit of 25s. per acre over and above that of the ordinary crop. This, too, is obtained with the slightest of risks. But it is unlikely that the average can be forced above this figure, for whilst much larger crops can be grown they become much more expensive to produce, owing to the operation of the law of diminishing returns, and owing to the fact that they are very liable to be laid in rough weather, and consequently are costly to harvest. Further, these over-fed crops are especially liable to the attacks of rust and other fungoid diseases, and this considerably reduces their yielding capacity.

20. More intensive cultivation will have to go hand-in-hand with the improvement of the varieties grown. Stiffer straw, capable of carrying heavier crops, and varieties resistant to disease will have to be provided before the most can be made of intensive cultivation. Some progress has been made in this direction, and even in 1936, a year when disease has been more prevalent than usual, and crops have been correspondingly low, yields of 80 bushels to the acre have been obtained with a rust-resistant variety. Attention will also have to be paid to other factors determining the yield per acre besides the available supply of food materials. Information is badly needed on the effects of regulating the available water supply by appropriate methods of tillage, the effects of deepening the root-run of the plants, of wider spacing and inter-tillage during the early stages of growth. Problems such as these might well be investigated by some of the experimental stations now in existence.

III.—EXTENSION OF ARABLE LAND.

21. There can be no question that an increase in the arable land of the country will lead to an increase in the amount of wheat grown. The fact which has been lost sight of in the past twenty years must be insisted on now-a-days, that England is naturally one of the best, if not the very best, wheat-growing country in the world. Its climate and much of its soil are almost ideal for the production of the heaviest crops. Were it not for these advantages, if our yield, for instance, had been only that of the United States, of Canada, or of any of the other great exporting countries, wheat would have disappeared by now from

our systems of husbandry. But it has kept its place in spite of everything merely because our yields average some 32 bushels per acre without much trouble on the part of the farmer.

22. It is certain that there are at least three million acres suitable for wheat cultivation, and probably considerably more. Indeed, in the 'seventies, when the crop was worth some 50s. per quarter, over two and three-quarter million acres were grown. This area can be gradually reconquered when the profits from wheat-growing make it economically possible. Much of the land now under grass which would have to be broken up is heavy and intractable, and it was the difficulty of working it which led to its abandonment as arable, rather than any lack of fertility. The coming of the motor plough with its capacity for working cheaply, and still more important, of working rapidly, should result in land of this type being got ready for autumn sowing under any except the most unfavourable conditions.

23. If, on the other hand, we consider the extremely light soils, usually locked upon as unsuitable for wheat-growing, our increasing knowledge of the best methods of breaking them and of the best varieties to grow should make their cultivation profitable. There is, further, the possibility of bringing large areas of land at elevations of 700 to 800 feet under wheat. The occasional crops grown under these conditions are often very satisfactory, but their late-ness and the consequent difficulty of harvesting these stands in the way of their more extensive growth. It should prove a relatively simple matter to breed varieties capable of maturing rapidly under these conditions.

APPENDIX III.

THE "AGRICOLA" SCHEME OF CROPPING.

HANDED IN BY MR. C. W. FIELDING.

Mr. C. W. Fielding, when giving evidence before the Sub-Committee (see Summary of Evidence, para. 56-75), gave particulars of the "Agricola" scheme of cropping which he had worked out. (Schedule I.—Agricola Scheme of Cropping.) Mr. Fielding wrote as follows:—

"Barely, the scheme involves a rotation of: One crop of wheat in each three years; one crop of barley, oats, peas or beans each three years; one clover crop in each seven years; and one doubling root crop in a seven year rotation; peas or beans should be introduced as one of the corn crops to aid the clover and to add natural nitrogen to the soil.

"Calculating the crop that would result on no higher basis than the present average United Kingdom yields, the quantity available for human food and for animal food that would be produced by the 'Agricola' system of cropping was ascertained.

"The wheat and potatoes that would be produced were found equal to the total United Kingdom present consumption. In order to ascertain how far the other crops would go towards feeding the animals needed to supply the United Kingdom with its needs of meat, milk, butter, cheese, sugar, &c., required the calculation of the rations needed to feed cattle, sheep and pigs of all ages, as well as the horses to work the land. (Schedule II.—'Agricola' Rations for Animals.)

"The quantities of animal food available were found to be sufficient for all the animals that would have to be kept to supply all needs of meat and half the required butter.

"I would like to point out that all the figures given in all the other Schedules are compilations of official figures and are all demonstrable by arithmetic. The Schedules II. of feeding rations requirements are, however, matters of practice, and, to some extent, of opinion. I worked these out from data collected over many months from every source available to me. As proof that under the whole 'Agricola' scheme we can grow almost all our own food depends on the accuracy of

these Schedules, I have been at great pains to verify that within small limits the rations are correct. As a practical check, I fed my own 30 farm horses and 500 cattle of all ages on these rations successfully for twelve months. I have also put the figures before the best experts, and so far no one has seriously disputed their suitability.

"Your Chairman, some months ago, thought my figures 'proved too much'. I therefore put them to another and very severe test. I converted the whole of the German crops into starch units of nourishment, and then worked out what all the animals kept in Germany would have consumed in starch units had they been fed on the 'Agricola' rations. (Schedule III.—Germany v. 'Agricola' Starch equivalents.)

"The results show that in total, the proposed rations for English animals correspond almost exactly with the German practice.

"I think, therefore, that these figures demonstrate that we can produce not only all our bread and potatoes, but all the food needed for the animals producing our meat, milk, cheese, &c., and most of our butter, if we crop the soil of the United Kingdom in a proper rotation suitable to the national needs.

"What next be done to produce these results? First, it means breaking up 4,000,000 acres of grass land; second, we must grow wheat in England at least one year out of three, produce more oats and barley in Scotland and Ireland, and also produce an increased yield of about 20 per cent. of hay and vetches through an increased consumption of basic slag and other phosphatic and nitrogenous manures.

"The 'Agricola' scheme will also require the import of an additional 14 million tons of oilcake (Germany before the War imported 2,000,000 tons largely from our Colonies). It will require that we should keep nearly two million more cows, several millions more young housed cattle, and that we should increase our pigs threefold."

SCHEDULE I.—"AGRICOLA" SCHEME OF CROPPING.

TABLE SHOWING HOW THE PRESENT CULTIVATED AREA OF THE UNITED KINGDOM CAN, ON A DIFFERENT METHOD OF CROPPING, PRODUCE ALL OUR FOOD REQUIREMENTS.

CROPS.	PROPOSED ACREAGE.	PRO- DUCTION. At present Averages.	CONSUMPTION, to Feed all Humans and Animals.				
			Horses.	Cattle.	Sheep.	Pigs.	Total.
	Acres.	Total Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Tons.	Qrs. (32,000,000) Tons.
WHEAT. Equal to ...	8,000,000	—	—	—	—	—	—
Flour (the United King- dom's needs).	—	4,800,000	—	—	—	—	—
Barley, Middlings and other Offals.	—	2,070,000	—	1,286,500	—	1,238,000	2,024,000
Straw	—	12,000,000	5,785,000	6,200,000	—	—	11,985,000
BARLEY, BEANS AND PEAS...	4,000,000	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grain	—	1,800,000	—	—	—	1,974,000	1,968,000
Straw	—	5,000,000	—	3,200,000	800,000	1,000,000	5,003,500
OATS (chiefly Scotland and Ireland).	5,600,000	—	—	—	—	—	—
Grain	—	5,480,000	3,128,000	—	321,000	—	5,449,000
Straw	—	6,250,000	—	5,462,000	800,000	—	6,262,000
POTATOES	1,000,000	8,000,000	—	—	—	—	—
TURKISH	2,000,000	20,000,000	—	10,735,000	12,800,000	—	23,535,000
MANGOLDS	1,000,000	20,000,000	2,357,000	20,782,000	—	1,866,000	25,000,000
Clover, &c.	8,000,000	6,250,000	1,408,000	2,006,000	—	—	5,418,000
TOTAL ARABLE CULTIVATION }	24,000,000						
MEADOW HAY	8,000,000	9,000,000	2,000,000	3,341,000	800,000	—	8,141,000
GRASS FOR GRAZING ...	18,000,000	—	—	—	—	—	—
TOTAL CULTIVATED AREA }	48,000,000						
IMPORTED:—		Imported now.					
CAKES:—							
Lined	—	—	—	361,500	—	—	361,500
Decorticated	—	—	—	1,607,000	—	—	1,607,000
Coconut, Soy, Cotton	—	—	—	1,485,000	241,000	—	1,726,000
		Imported 1913.					3,694,500
MAIZE AND MAIZE MEAL	—	2,459,000	545,000	—	—	1,860,000	2,233,000

SCHEDULE II.—"AGRICOLA" RATIONS FOR ANIMALS.

(a.) FOOD OF HORSES AND COLTS: RATIONS PER HORSE AND COLT PER ANNUM.

	OATS.		HAY.		STRAW.		MAIZE.		MANGOLDS.		GRASS.	
	At lbs. per day.	Total lbs. per horse per ann.	At lbs. per day.	Total lbs. per horse per ann.	At lbs. per day.	Total lbs. per horse per ann.	At lbs. per day.	Total lbs. per horse per ann.	At lbs. per day.	Total lbs. per horse per ann.	At lbs. per day.	Total lbs. per horse per ann.
WORK HORSES:—												
200 days	12	2,400	10	2,000	15	3,000	2	400	15	3,000	—	—
100 "	8	800	8	800	15	1,500	—	—	—	—	60	6,000
65 " resting ...	4	260	10	650	20	1,300	—	—	—	—	—	—
PER ANNUM ...	—	3,460	—	3,450	—	5,800	—	400	—	3,000	—	6,000
COLTS (Average):—												
200 days	2	780	10	2,600	10	2,600	—	—	—	—	20	7,300

(A.) TOTAL FOOD PER ANNUM FOR HORSES AND COLTS.

	1,000,000 WORK HORSES.		500,000 COLTS.		TOTAL per ann.
	At Rs. per Horse per ann.	Total Tons per ann.	At lbs. per Colt per ann.	Total Tons per ann.	
Oats	3,400	2,945,000	730	162,000	Tons. 3,107,000
Hay	3,150	2,565,000	3,600	815,000	3,408,000
Straw	5,800	4,971,000	5,650	815,000	5,786,000
Wheat	400	345,000	—	—	345,000
Mangolds	3,000	2,327,000	—	—	2,327,000
Grass	6,000	4,714,000	7,800	1,630,000	6,344,000

(A.) CATTLE—DURING 180 WINTER DAYS.

	5,000,000 Cattle, 6-6 months old.		2,000,000 6-12 months old.		1,000,000 12-18 months old.		5,000,000 18-24 months, old and Dry Cows.		500,000 Fattening Stock.		4,500,000 Suckling Cows.		Total for 180 Winter Days
	Lbs. each per day.	Total for 180 days.	Lbs. each per day.	Total for 180 days.	Lbs. each per day.	Total for 180 days.	Lbs. each per day.	Total for 180 days.	Lbs. each per day.	Total for 180 days.	Lbs. each per day.	Total for 180 days.	
Wheat and Oat Straw	—	Tons.	5	Tons.	15	Tons.	20	5,425,000	15	Tons.	35	Tons.	Tons.
Maize Hay	5	321,000	5	305,000	5	305,000	5	3,400,000	5	568,000	5	5,327,000	14,832,000
Clover Hay	5	482,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	568,000	5	1,307,000	4,911,000
Mangolds	5	482,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	568,000	5	1,307,000	3,038,000
Turnips	5	482,000	5	305,000	20	1,312,000	20	3,400,000	5	568,000	60	17,800,000	20,752,000
Linseed	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	16,732,000
Desiccated Cakes	1	160,000	—	—	—	—	—	—	4	241,000	—	—	801,000
Cotton, Soy, or Coconut Cakes	—	—	5	320,000	2	331,000	5	344,000	—	—	4	1,467,000	1,607,000
Beet	—	—	—	—	—	—	5	343,000	—	—	2	722,500	1,250,500

DURING 180 SUMMER DAYS cattle will be cut at grass, the following Cattle Allowances being made to Fattening Cattle only, viz. :-

5 lbs. of oats and 5 lbs. of clover hay.

(d.) SHEEP.

	11,000,000 EWES AND LAMBS. For 60 days.		11,000,000 SHEEP FATTENING. For 60 days.		24,000,000 SHEEP. For 120 days.		TOTAL Tons per annum.
	At lbs. per day.	Total Tons.	At lbs. per day.	Total Tons.	At lbs. per day.	Total Tons.	
Oats	1	321,000	—	—	—	—	321,000
Oat and Barley Straw	1	321,000	—	—	1	1,286,000	1,607,000
Hay	1	321,000	1	482,000	—	—	803,000
Turnips	5	1,605,000	10	4,821,000	5	6,430,000	12,856,000
Cakes	—	—	4	241,000	—	—	241,000

(e.) PIGS.

	4,000,000 GROWING (5-8 months). For 245 days.		2,000,000 FATTENING (8-10 months). For 305 days.		800,000 SOWS. For 305 days.		TOTAL Tons per annum.
	At lbs. per day.	Total Tons.	At lbs. per day.	Total Tons.	At lbs. per day.	Total Tons.	
Pollard, Sharps and Middlings	1	978,000	—	—	2	260,000	1,238,000
Barley, Meal, Beans and Peas	1	978,000	3	278,000	—	—	1,256,000
Maine Meal	1	978,000	2	652,000	2	260,000	1,890,000
Potatoes (boiled)	—	—	2	652,000	—	—	652,000
Mangolds	2	1,954,000	—	—	—	—	1,954,000
Straw	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,040,000

SCHEDULE III.—GERMANY & "AGRICOLA" STARCH EQUIVALENTS.

TABLE SHOWING COMPARISON IN STARCH EQUIVALENTS BETWEEN ACTUAL CONSUMPTION OF FOOD BY ANIMALS AND CALCULATED CONSUMPTION UNDER "AGRICOLA" SCHEME.

	ACTUAL CONSUMPTION.			CONSUMPTION UNDER "AGRICOLA" SCHEME.		
	Total Consumption.	At Starch Equivalents.	Starch Equivalents.	Total Consumption.	At Starch Equivalents.	Starch Equivalents.
	Tons.		Tons.	Tons.		Tons.
FEEDING STUFF RATIONS.						
Wheat and Rye offals	5,534,000	0.54	2,983,360	5,275,000	0.54	2,933,500
Barley	6,647,000	0.74	4,915,780	4,882,000	0.74	3,617,120
Beans and Peas	1,664,000	0.69	1,141,360	—	—	—
Oats	2,402,000	0.63	5,395,470	5,926,000	0.63	3,735,380
Maize and Maize Meal	304,000	0.84	759,360	5,567,000	0.84	4,688,280
Linnseed and Oil Seeds	1,125,000	1.19	1,345,510	261,000	1.19	428,590
Hemp and Rape	315,000	1.09	312,000	—	—	—
Glueballs	526,000	0.55	289,300	5,090,000	0.55	2,804,450
TOTAL FOR FEEDING STUFF RATIONS	26,112,000	—	17,418,980	27,010,000	—	17,955,520
ROOT RATIONS.						
Mangeto	23,500,000	0.07	2,583,000	—	—	—
Turnips	10,000,000	0.07	704,000	—	—	—
Potato and Sugar Beet Residues from Distilling, &c., say	15,000,000	0.15	2,250,000	82,127,000	0.07	5,748,890
TOTAL ROOT RATIONS	61,900,000	—	5,537,000	82,127,000	—	5,748,890
FORAGE RATIONS.						
Hay	30,015,000	0.24	7,203,600	19,007,000	0.24	4,573,680
Wheat and Rye Straw	32,000,000	0.11	3,520,000	—	Average, 0.14	4,968,480
Barley Straw	5,000,000	0.17	850,000	35,639,000	—	—
Oat Straw	13,500,000	0.20	2,700,000	—	—	—
Mixed Corn	2,228,000	0.70	1,559,600	—	—	—
" Straw	1,000,000	0.30	400,000	—	—	—
	64,743,000	—	16,933,200	54,646,000	—	9,562,160
Needed for Winter Rations	54,689,000	—	9,562,160	—	—	—
Surplus for Summer Feeding of Excess Cattle	50,064,000	—	6,671,040	—	—	—

APPENDIX IV.

NUMBER OF PERSONS ENGAGED IN AGRICULTURE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM AS RETURNED AT EACH CENSUS FROM 1851-1911.

Year.	Farmers and Graziers(a).		Farmers' relatives.	Farm employees.		Total.	
	Males.	Females.	Males.	Males.	Females.	Males.	Females.
<i>England and Wales.</i>							
1851	276,037	(b)	(c)	799,875	(b)	(c)	(c)
1861	229,060	19,172	(c)	922,855	37,294	(c)	56,466
1871	236,515	22,915	111,704	1,114,905	143,021	1,458,124	165,937
1881	226,867	22,778	92,321	1,106,379	96,249	1,425,557	113,027
1891	225,169	24,382	76,323	920,145	57,968	1,237,640	82,225
1901	203,329	20,514	75,197	849,829	40,346	1,128,555	80,950
1911	201,818	21,492	67,267	774,762	24,150	1,045,987	45,842
1901	202,761	21,548	69,165	681,728	12,052	923,644	33,550
1911	202,761	20,527	67,689	665,358	13,245	971,708	33,272
<i>Scotland.</i>							
1851	79,853	(b)	(c)	87,292	(b)	(c)	(c)
1861	51,982	3,798	(c)	148,715	18,511	(c)	22,304
1871	48,658	4,845	24,168	148,783	34,597	221,409	59,332
1881	54,777	6,410	17,658	138,350	40,653	210,639	47,665
1891	48,896	6,817	34,475	122,327	42,773	205,096	49,580
1901	46,116	7,087	16,131	105,533	44,172	169,960	51,385
1911	47,525	8,897	17,081	98,718	22,065	163,324	28,882
1901	45,073	7,522	17,550	89,091	12,810	151,214	27,434
1911	45,986	6,712	16,627	87,832	15,087	148,425	31,749
<i>Ireland.</i>							
1851	659,613	(b)	(c)	567,441	(b)	(c)	(c)
1861	459,268	18,184	(c)	1,228,771	195,549	(c)	144,633
1871	384,088	19,707	(c)	985,027	148,676	(c)	168,383
1881	415,491	27,381	(c)	799,219	89,158	(c)	116,550
1891	392,251	31,590	15,473	645,896	81,990	1,074,820	113,340
1901	382,342	52,580	189,576	454,282	45,774	1,005,300	105,380
1911	348,435	68,568	212,751	374,147	27,045	895,318	95,611
1901	328,853	70,584	214,351	325,084	16,542	873,198	67,076
1911	328,473	54,684	169,346	344,302	5,297	842,621	50,931
<i>United Kingdom.</i>							
1851	1,615,403	(b)	(d)	1,454,406	(b)	(c)	(c)
1861	732,410	41,160	(d)	2,239,841	189,354	(c)	168,383
1871	659,262	47,488	(d)	2,198,715	346,224	(c)	210,639
1881	605,125	56,579	(d)	2,042,357	226,061	(c)	116,550
1891	608,216	62,545	127,374	1,723,266	189,711	2,516,756	245,253
1901	633,787	87,987	280,564	1,589,704	130,292	2,304,435	217,559
1911	637,378	97,087	297,690	1,247,927	73,248	2,142,604	170,513
1901	577,177	90,904	220,976	1,054,905	48,354	1,958,056	148,208
1911	581,390	81,435	283,542	1,097,932	33,569	1,982,764	115,092

(a) Includes in the case of Scotland "Fenmen" and "Porticomen."

(b) Presumably included with males.

(c) No return.

(d) Not returned as such (except for Great Britain in 1851 and 1861).

Notes.

(1) It must be remembered that the basis of the above figures is the description which each household gives of himself, and the members of his household. The number of farmers and graziers shown above bears no relation to the number of persons occupying agricultural land, but represents only such as described themselves as farmers or graziers on their Census schedules, by reason of farming or grazing being their only, or principal, source of livelihood. In Ireland, for example, the number of agricultural occupiers in 1911 above 5 acres was 421,150, while the number of farmers and graziers according to the Census Returns was 323,167.

(2) Owing to the different methods of classification, the returns for 1851 and 1861 do not afford reliable comparisons either with each other or with later years, and the same stipulation applies more or less to the 1881 census. With regard to later censuses also it should be remembered that occupation definitions do not carry precisely the same significance decade by decade, and consequently close comparisons are not justified.

(3) Farmers' female relatives are excluded as they are largely engaged in domestic duties and cannot be regarded as mainly employed on the work of the farm.

(4) "Farm Employees" comprise (in the later censuses) Farm Bailiffs, Foremen, Shepherds, persons in charge of horses and cattle, and ordinary farm labourers, but in the reports for earlier years such detailed classifications are not given. In 1861 "drovers" are included for Ireland, as in the Irish return for that year "herds" were comprised in the category "herds and drovers."

(5) The figures for the later censuses relate to persons aged 10 years and upwards, but the returns for 1841 (and 1851 in the case of Ireland), comprise also children below 10 years, while the occupation census of 1881, was apparently confined to persons of 20 years and upwards.

(6) Persons engaged in market gardening and other auxiliary agricultural pursuits, are excluded on account of the difficulty of giving comparative figures for the different censuses.

(7) The figures from 1861 onwards exclude the retired, who are included in some or all of the earlier censuses.